LATE BYZANTIUM RECONSIDERED

The Arts of the Palaiologan Era in the Mediterranean

Edited by ANDREA MATTIELLO and
MARIA ALESSIA ROSSI

Late Byzantium Reconsidered

Late Byzantium Reconsidered offers a unique collection of essays analysing the artistic achievements of Mediterranean centres linked to the Byzantine Empire between 1261, when the Palaiologan dynasty re-conquered Constantinople, and the decades after 1453, when the Ottomans took the city, marking the end of the Empire. These centuries were characterised by the rising of socio-political elites, in regions such as Crete, Italy, Laconia, Serbia, and Trebizond, that, while sharing cultural and artistic values influenced by the Byzantine Empire, were also developing innovative and original visual and cultural standards.

The comparative and interdisciplinary framework offered by this volume aims to challenge established ideas concerning the late Byzantine period such as decline, renewal, and innovation. By examining specific case studies of cultural production from within and outside Byzantium, the chapters in this volume highlight the intrinsic innovative nature of the socio-cultural identities active in the late medieval and early modern Mediterranean vis-à-vis the rhetorical assumption of the cultural contraction of the Byzantine Empire.

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Foreword

This edited volume is the product of an international conference entitled 'Reconsidering the Concept of Decline and the Arts of the Palaiologan Era', that took place on 24–25 February 2017 at the University of Birmingham in collaboration with the Courtauld Institute of Art. This event comprised both a symposium and a workshop. The symposium hosted a series of keynote lectures and papers presented by distinguished and early-career Byzantine art historians. The workshop was organised with the kind help of postgraduate students who gave short presentations on a selection of art-historical case studies, providing an opportunity for scholars and students to discuss the main topics of the symposium informally.

The aim of the conference was twofold: on one hand, it examined and contextualised the artistic and cultural production of geopolitical centres that were controlled by, or in contact with, the Late Byzantine Empire, in areas such as the Adriatic and Balkan regions, the major islands of Cyprus and Crete, and the regions surrounding the cities of Constantinople, Thessaloniki, and Mystras; on the other, it explored the many intellectual implications encoded in the innovative artistic production of the Palaiologan era often simplified by a rigid understanding of what is Byzantine and what is not.

Ultimately, the conference investigated cultural and artistic achievements that, once released by the Byzantine Empire during the last centuries of its existence, then migrated towards new frontiers of intellectual achievement. The aim of the conference and of its proceedings is to examine a selection of case studies counter-balancing the notion of decline and the narrative of decay frequently acknowledged for this period; and to encourage an understanding of transformation where the Byzantine cultural heritage was integrated into new socio-political orders or religious settings. Specifically, this volume promotes the view of the artistic production of the Palaiologan era as resourceful and innovative in light of the possibilities offered by the many interactions with a multitude of political and economic polities in an open and wide Mediterranean, which at the time was not perceived as either contracting or declining but rather as an opportunity for political and economic expansion. The establishment in the East of a strong Ottoman Empire during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was in part the reason for the end of the Byzantine Empire, but this was not recognised by contemporaries as a deterrent to artistic and cultural production. In contrast, the case studies gathered

here showcase cultural exchanges and interactions between political and cultural actors belonging to both the Palaiologan and the neighbouring courts where similarities were acknowledged, and differences were encoded in new formulations.

The aim of this volume is visually mirrored by the image we chose for our front cover. It shows a detail from the front panel of the cassone, or hope chest, attributed to the workshop of Apollonio di Giovanni di Tomaso and the workshop of Marco del Buono Giamberti (after ca. 1461), now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The scene shows the struggle and the defeat of the Ottoman armies of Sultan Bayezid I by the Mongol King Tamerlane (1336–1405) in 1402 at Ankara. The scene is depicted as if taking place in an imagined battlefield in front of the cities of Constantinople and Trebizond, which are rendered iconographically as they were thought to appear after 1453, when Constantinople had already been captured by the Ottomans – as indexed by the half-crescent on the top of Hagia Sophia –, and before 1461 when Trebizond was conquered by Sultan Mehmet II. The depiction of the defeat of the Ottoman armies on a Florentine wedding cassone dating to the second half of the fifteenth century should be read as an indication of good auspices in the context of Florentine wedding gift exchanges. Auspices are iconographically symbolised by the defeat of the most threatening force in the Mediterranean in an anachronistic battlefield demarcated by two of the most important Byzantine cities. The subject and the iconography adopted then epitomise the high esteem in which the Florentine aristocracy held the Byzantine Empire with its millennial history, its political centrality, its cultural heritage, and its recognisable and iconic importance. As mentioned earlier and discussed throughout this volume, these centuries were not perceived as a time of decline, and the rise of a strong Ottoman Empire was not seen as a deterrent to artistic production. In other words, in Florence, in the mid-fifteenth century, the idea of Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire, even though lost, was very much still present and alive.

Acknowledgements

Notes on contributors

Tatiana Bardashova received her bachelor's and master's degrees in World History from the Ural Federal University, Yekaterinburg, in Russia, in 2010 and 2012, respectively. Since 2013, she has been a doctoral candidate in Byzantine Studies at the University of Cologne. This chapter forms part of her PhD thesis entitled 'Court Ceremonial in the Empire of Trebizond between 1204 and 1461'. Her dissertation explores the ceremonial component of court culture in the Empire of Trebizond, which remains an under-researched study area in the field of modern Byzantine Studies.

Ludovic Bender is a researcher in Byzantine art and archaeology. Since 2017, he has been working at TERA, a private institution in Switzerland, in the field of Late Antique and Early medieval archaeology. His work focuses on architecture, topography and landscape. He completed his PhD at Fribourg University, Switzerland. For his doctoral project he studied the inscription, in the natural and cultural landscapes, of cave and cliff-side hermitages and monasteries in Laconia in Greece, from the eleventh to the mid-fifteenth century. He also specialises in digital technologies applied to archaeological documentation, such as digital surveying, photogrammetry, and GIS mapping.

Livia Bevilacqua received her PhD in History of Art from Sapienza University of Rome in 2010, where she specialised in medieval and Byzantine art history. Her research focuses on the artistic contacts and exchanges in the medieval Mediterranean, specifically between Byzantium and the West, with an emphasis on patronage. She has published a monograph on aristocratic patronage in the Middle Byzantine period, and various papers on several topics, including bronze doors, Romanesque and Late Gothic painting, manuscript illumination, the reuse of spolia in medieval and Byzantine art, and art historiography. Recently she curated an exhibition of photos of Byzantine monuments in Anatolia. She has been awarded research fellowships in Italy, in Turkey, and in the UK. She collaborates with Sapienza and IULM University of Milan, and teaches Italian Art History at high school.

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Andrew Griebeler studied medieval and Byzantine art with Diliana Angelova at the University of California, Berkeley. He graduated with a BA in art history and biology at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington. His dissertation research focuses on Byzantine botanical illustration and its role in the transmission and transformation of scientific knowledge.

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University of Birmingham. His research centres on the life-cycle and spatial composition of monastic communities in Byzantine Thrace. In his work, he follows an interdisciplinary methodology that brings together textual sources with the results of archaeological fieldwork. Makris has held fellowships at the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection (Junior Fellow), Koç University's Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations, and Princeton University's Seeger Center for Hellenic Studies.

Andrea Mattiello is a Byzantine Art and Contemporary Art historian. His interests in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries range from the contribution of photography in the History of Architecture, to the development of twentieth-century Performance Art. He received a Master's degree in History of Architecture, a Master's in Visual Arts at the Università IUAV of Venice and a PhD in Theory and History of Art at the School for Advanced Studies Ca' Foscari/IUAV in Venice. In 2018, he defended a PhD at the Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies, at the University of Birmingham, with research on the cross-cultural artistic production in Mystras in relation to the agency of the Italian and Frankish wives of the Byzantine despots of Morea. As a scholar he has published and lectured on the use of photography in the History of Architecture, on performative practices in the United States, and on fourteenth-/fifteenth-century artistic production in the city of Mystras in light of the dynastic and foreign policy of the Palaiologan court. He has been a Research Fellow at the International Centre for Architectural Studies Andrea Palladio in Vicenza and the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence. He has collaborated as curator with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Biennale di Venezia and the University of Birmingham.

Maria Alessia Rossi is the Samuel H. Kress Postdoctoral Researcher at the Index of Medieval Art at Princeton University, USA. She received her MA and PhD from the Courtauld Institute of Art, UK. She has taught medieval and byzantine art history in diverse settings, such as the Courtauld, adult education institutions in London, and New Jersey prisons. She is one of the organisers of the research project 'Exploring Fourteenth-Century Art Across the Eastern and Western Christian World' and is co-organising the symposium titled 'Medieval Art and Architecture at the Crossroads of the Latin, Greek, and Slavic Cultural Spheres (c.1300–c.1550)'. Currently she is working on a book exploring the proliferation of Christ's miracles in monumental decoration in Byzantium (1261–1330).

Lilyana Yordanova completed her undergraduate studies in History of Art and Archaeology at Aix-Marseille I University, followed by a Research Master in Byzantine art at the Sorbonne. She is currently a PhD candidate at the École Pratique des Hautes Études – Université Paris Sciences et Lettres. As such, Yordanova was a fellow at the Maison française in Oxford and the École française in Athens. By challenging classical periodisation, her doctoral dissertation explores the artistic, social and economic dimensions of pious patronage in

the medieval Bulgarian lands from the last decades of the twelfth century to the end of the fifteenth. The study is based on a cluster of sources such as religious foundations, manuscripts, official charters, and the minor arts. Yordanova's research interests include questions related to ideology, gender, and intercultural and interreligious relations in the Balkans.

Introduction

Andrea Mattiello and Maria Alessia Rossi

Slobodan Ćurčić, in his Introduction to *The Twilight of Byzantium*, writes, 'Despite its [the Byzantine Empire's] shrunken territory, its ailing economy and social turmoil, the world of Palaeologan Byzantium still had much to offer.'[1] The aim of this volume is to challenge this idea, arguing that it is precisely *because* of the political weakness and military defeats that the Palaiologan artistic production has *so much* to offer. The last centuries of the Byzantine Empire were characterised by the necessity for new and innovative strategies to guarantee its continuation, strategies negotiated with its neighbours by the offices of both the emperor and the patriarch, as well as by other relevant groups of Byzantine society.[2] It could be argued that, as a consequence of the 1204 conquest of Constantinople, and again after 1261, when the Palaiologoi took it back from the Latins, the notion of the existence of the Empire justified the need for political strategies aimed at the survival of a shrinking Empire that had to face external and internal, friendly and aggressive dynamics linked to three main groups that Nevra Necipoğlu has 'labelled as pro-Latin/anti-Ottoman, pro-Ottoman/anti-Latin, and anti-Latin/anti-Ottoman'.[3] And while this is true, and on many occasions the Byzantine Empire faced exogenous threats and its capital was besieged, there is a specificity to the Palaiologan period with its multiplicity of complex relations resulting from the presence both within and beyond its boundaries of large multi-cultural and multi-religious communities, as well as from the strong connections with a multitude of polities that originated from the Empire itself and that were interlinked across the Mediterranean.[4] It is not the fall of Constantinople in 1453 that determined the peculiarity of this period, but rather the dialectic tension between the Byzantine Empire's loss of control and the growing power of its neighbours that started after 1204 and was not tamed after 1261.[5] This tension is at the heart of this volume because, while being the reason for the political decline of the Empire, it is analysed as a powerful source for the cultural and artistic production in Byzantium and in its neighbouring polities, during the centuries of Palaiologan rule.

Scholars have long dealt with the Late Byzantine period according to Edward Gibbon's tightly intertwined concepts of decline and fall.[6] By examining specific case studies within and outside the Byzantine Empire, this volume aims to show that decline in the Palaiologan period is not necessarily a synonym for fall, but rather for transformation. The art and the iconographic repertoire of the late period

were grounded on centennial stratifications and conventions that developed and were codified after the Iconoclast controversy but that, after the fall of the Empire to the Latins in 1204, increasingly showed awareness of the many instances, directions and solutions developed in the visual artistic production around the Mediterranean.[7] The late period is a time of complexity in which the increase in diplomatic and trading exchanges, between different sections of society, offers the ground to promote culture as the result of a dialogue between different traditions and standards pertaining to a multiplicity of subjects.[8]

Transformation, tension, and survival were deeply intertwined both within the geographical borders of the Byzantine Empire and in the relationship between Byzantium and its neighbours. The dynamics need further explanation: the aim of the following chapters is not to define what is 'Byzantine' and what is 'not-Byzantine'. On the contrary, it will be displayed how in the Late Byzantine period, due to political and economic circumstances, there is, on the one side, no rigorous definition of what constitutes the art of the Empire of the Romans while, on the other, there is a generalised process of cultural appropriation by political entities bordering the Empire of what was considered Byzantine, both imperial and religious. How can we explain this paradox? How can there be examples of cultural appropriation if it is not clear-cut what is Byzantine and what is not?

The Palaiologan period is characterised by fluidity in the manifold developments of the artistic production of both the Greek- and non-Greek-speaking communities active during the period in those different geographical regions connected with the Byzantine Empire. That is never straightforward. It takes into consideration instances of preservation as well as instances of transformation. And when discussing Byzantine art after 1204, it is always important to differentiate within the large and transformative world of the former territories of the Empire and start to look at the peculiarities of regional production and begin to address what can be considered the result of regional instances vis-à-vis what can be considered attempts at dialogue with established authorities such as the offices of the emperor or the patriarch or major monastic communities like those on Mount Athos. Regardless of the nature of each individual artistic product within this two-sided polarisation, the aim of this edited volume is to show that this polarisation was an inner generative force of the period which in several instances strengthened and fed the art of the Palaiologan era.

Each of the 12 chapters in this volume sheds light on a different instance of creative strength, originality and transformation as the outcome of the intricate mutability of this period, defined by the many socio-political entities confronting each other across the wider Mediterranean. While examining different subjects, these essays prove that the specificity of this period stems from the fact that this tension is not only within the Byzantine Empire.

The first seven chapters showcase survival within Byzantium, challenging the teleological narrative offered by decades of scholarship where decline precipitates the final fall of the Empire. Starting with Niels Gaul, Chapter 1, ' "And the whole city cheered": the poetics and politics of the miraculous in the Early Palaiologan period', offers an introduction to the complexity of the period under investigation. By examining two instances of the miraculous preserved in late Byzantine

historiography, this chapter attempts to illuminate how miracles could be exploited by politicians to achieve civic goals or steer the contemporary civic discourse.

In Chapter 2, 'Art in decline or art in the age of decline? Historiography and new approaches to Late Byzantine painting', Ivana Jevtić considers the parallelism between Late Antique and Late Byzantine artistic production in light of the marked discrepancies between political turbulence and economic weakening, on the one hand, and cultural strength and a rich and diverse artistic production, on the other. Furthermore, both periods present a comparable series of contrasts between reuse and originality, conservatism and innovation, naturalism and abstraction, decline and ascendency. By focusing on thirteenth- and fourteenth-century painting, this chapter uses the concept of decline to discuss the retrospective attitude in iconography and style, the revival of the antique and classicism in Late Byzantine art.

Cecily Hilsdale in Chapter 3, 'The timeliness of timelessness: reconsidering decline in the Paliologan period', challenges the historiography of Late Byzantium, arguing that Byzantines of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries may have understood their historical moment as one of decline, but not as leading inexorably towards fall. In the face of pronounced socio-economic exigencies, Palaiologan emperors actively sought to ameliorate their standing in the medieval world, and cultural production figured prominently in this agenda, promoting the artistic sphere as a diplomatic strategy.

Similarly, Chapter 4. 'Reconsidering the Early Palaiologan period: anti-Latin propaganda, miracle accounts, and monumental art', examines how Andronikos II's efforts to heal the divisions inside the Byzantine Empire, and specifically within the Orthodox Church, managed to create a less acrimonious atmosphere, ushering in the flourishing of the arts and letters. This contribution aims to suggest an innovative reading of this period through the examination of miracles in both monumental decoration and written accounts. Maria Alessia Rossi traces back the widespread interest in miracles to the cultural milieu surrounding Andronikos, and explains their proliferation in connection to the anti-Latin propaganda of the Orthodox Church.

Chapter 5, 'How to illustrate a scientific treatise in the Palaiologan period', focuses on the emergence of Byzantine illustrated botanical albums at the end of the thirteenth century, and their continued development over the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Andrew Griebeler demonstrates, through the analysis of botanical albums, the increasing prominence of pictures in Late Byzantine scientific discourse and practice, and that especially in this period there was a fruitful dialogue taking place with Northern Italian and Islamic traditions of botanical inquiry and illustration.

Ludovic Bender, in Chapter 6, 'Looking beyond the city walls of Mystras: the transformation of the religious landscape of Laconia', shows how, in the region of Laconia during the Palaiologan period, we encounter a flourishing of the religious built environment. The chapter shows that the growth of religious foundations from the mid-thirteenth to the fifteenth century, rather than resulting only from the initiatives of higher political and religious entities, such as the imperial family and the patriarchate, was particularly dependent on acts of patronage by both the

local elites and the rural communities active in the region. These acts of patronage transformed and reshaped the religious and cultural landscape of Laconia during one of its most prosperous periods, despite the adverse historical conditions for the Byzantine Empire.

Similarly, Chapter 7, 'Remnants of an era: monasteries and lay piety in Late Byzantine Sozopolis', considers the transformative role of monastic communities on the coast of the Black Sea. Georgios Makris demonstrates how the city port of Sozopolis and its regional context changed during the Late Byzantine period as a result of building activities promoted by monasteries. By exploring the interactions between monastic and lay communities active in both the city and its surroundings, the chapter demonstrates the central role of the monastic landscape of Sozopolis in making the city a novel, dynamic and critical pole for the eastern Mediterranean.

The remaining five contributions shift the focus of attention to the wider Mediterranean, shedding light on the relationship between the Byzantine Empire and its neighbours.

Chapters 8 and 9 look at the negotiation between Orthodox identity and the wider Mediterranean. Specifically, Angeliki Lymberopoulou, in Chapter 8, 'Palaiologan art from regional Crete: artistic decline or social progress?', takes a different perspective, engaging with a comparison between well-known Palaiologan monumental art from main urban centres and that of tiny churches found in remote places in regional Crete. Despite the island being under Venetian rule when the Palaiologoi were emperors, the religious character of its art remained predominantly Byzantine, sponsored primarily by the native Greek Orthodox population. These contributions suggest a re-evaluation of the concept of decline from the angle offered by the lower and middle classes outside the capital.

In Chapter 9, 'Liturgical and devotional artefacts in the Venetian churches of the Levant, thirteenth to fifteenth centuries', Livia Bevilacqua discusses the work of artists, goldsmiths and silversmiths making liturgical vessels in the context of Venetian churches in the Levant during the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. The chapter offers an analysis of these vessels and demonstrates the degree of fluidity pertaining to these artefacts, which are witnesses of the circulation of new artistic ideas borrowed from Catholic and non-Catholic religious and cultural backgrounds. The chapter shows how diverse communities interacted with one another by experiencing a wide degree of creativity and freedom through the exchange of liturgical implements, small furniture and portable devotional objects: from books to silverware, from textiles to icons. These objects provide remarkable evidence of the fruitful circulation between diverse religious communities, throughout the wide Mediterranean basin.

In Chapter 10, 'Who's that man? The perception of Byzantium in fifteenth-century Italy', Andrea Mattiello considers the impact of the Byzantine imperial office on the Western understanding, definition, and perception of authority and rulership. He does so through a case study of the fifteenth-century fresco depiction of the *Procession of the Magi* by Benozzo Gozzoli in the chapel of the Medici Riccardi palace in Florence. The chapter analyses the political and cultural

implications and the perception in Italy of the imperial office of the Byzantine Empire, of its termination as well as its legacy, in relation to the dynastic aspirations and visual political promotion strategies of the Medici, one of the most influential families of the Italian peninsula, by associating themselves with the aura of the Palaiologoi, the last dynasty of the Empire of the Romaioi.

While sharing cultural and artistic values influenced by the Byzantine Empire, the late period also saw the development of innovative and original visual and cultural idioms by its neighbours, such as the Empire of Trebizond and the Bulgarian Kingdom. Specifically, in Chapter 11, 'The story behind the image: the literary patronage of Tsar Ivan Alexander of Bulgaria between ostentation and decline', Lyliana Yordanova reconsiders artistic production created during the reign and patronage of Tsar Ivan Alexander (1331–71). Were models of the Byzantine imperial image adopted and transformed in Ivan Alexander's depictions in order to suit his specific political agenda? The aim of the chapter is to discuss the long-neglected agency of the Bulgarian Manasses and the London Gospels on the background of the dynastic, military and economic struggles during Ivan Alexander's reign.

In Chapter 12, 'Imperial portraits of the Grand Komnenoi of Trebizond (1204–1461)', Tatiana Bardashova examines the dialectic between the emperors of Trebizond and the Byzantine emperors. Specifically, she looks at the negotiation of the visual representation of imperial power, by means of manuscripts, icons, coins, and seals, between their ancestors, the Byzantine emperors from the Komnenian dynasty and the Late Byzantine emperors of the Palaiologan dynasty, who were contemporaneous to them.

The essays collected in this volume are here presented as opportunities to reconsider and re-evaluate the artistic production of Late Byzantium. They offer a selection of case studies questioning any rigid understandings of rich, complex, and stratified cultural products and enterprises that were commissioned, executed and appreciated within 'multiconfessional, multi-ethnic, and multilayered societies of the medieval Mediterranean' that were linked to the Byzantine Empire.[9] They challenge any unidirectional analytical approaches for the studying of the materials they discuss, while pursuing, in the words of Michele Bacci, 'a deeper understanding of the social, religious, cultural, and even 'technical' dynamics underlying the blending and combination of forms'.[10]

Notes

1 Ćurčić and Mouriki (1991: 4).
2 Necipoğlu (2009: 285–9).
3 Ibid.: 4.
4 For a recent discussion of the nature of the cross-cultural interactions in areas such as Cyprus, Crete or the Peloponnese, see Lymberopoulou (2018: 3–5). See also Joubert and Caillet (2012). For an overview of Byzantium's neighbours in the late period, see Brooks and Oresko (2006).
5 This tension is read as crucial for the decline of the Empire since the time of Michael VIII Palaiologos' reign, see Nicol (1993: 107–21).

  6 Gibbon (1827).
  7 The secondary literature on this topic is quite extensive, see, among recent publications, Lymberopoulou (2018).
  8 See Hilsdale (2014) and Evans (2004), with further bibliography.
  9 Bacci (2013: 205). For a survey of these medieval Mediterranean societies, see also Bacci (2008: 339–54).
 10 Ibid.

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1 'And the whole city cheered'
The poetics and politics of the miraculous in the Early Palaiologan period

Niels Gaul

Post-1204 Byzantine history – Laskarid or Nicaean history, in this case – began with a display of civic independence.[1] If, that is, we trust George Akropolites who, writing his *History* towards the end of the thirteenth century,[2] faithfully preserved the following incident (while at the same time glossing over it as discreetly as possible – for, somewhat embarrassingly, it seems to have been an act of 'political' resistance): when the *despotēs* Theodore Laskaris, the future emperor in exile, fled Constantinople together with his wife and daughters,

> arriving at the city of Nicaea, he appealed to the citizens to admit him into the city and to accept him as their lord. But they would not admit him. Then Laskaris urged them persistently and, even though he entreated them to admit his wife only, he persuaded them with difficulty.[3]

The reader is not told who 'the Nicaeans' were – presumably, the local elite rather than the *dēmos* – and in which way they reached 'their' decision, nor is there any evidence permitting a prosopographical scrutiny of this incident, but one is led to assume that the city acted unanimously, as a whole.

The long and pious reign of Andronikos II Palaiologos (r. 1282–1328) saw the loss of the Anatolian provinces to the advancing Ottoman and Turkmen tribes and in its wake the transformation of the only recently restored medieval Eastern Roman Empire, with Constantinople as its centre, from a regional into a local power.[4] Consequence, as much as cause, of this rapid fragmentation of the centralising (imperial) power was the re-emergence, after a long gap from imperial and late antique Rome, of meaningful civic discourse. This discourse started resurfacing from the twelfth century onward for a variety of reasons[5] and accelerated with the cataclysmic events of 1204 and the temporary – or perhaps not so temporary, for Constantinople was never to fully recover its previous status – loss of the Empire's ideological centre.[6] With the City of Constantine in 'Latin' hands, former subject cities stepped up to take her place; the initially reluctant city of Nicaea emerged as one of the more important among them. *Poleis* started perceiving themselves once again as distinct political entities, whose elites sought to take charge of their own affairs internally as well as externally. Normally, this

happened within the imperial framework, but especially during the fourteenth-century civil wars, there was room for manoeuvre.

In fact, the Nicaean attestation of civic independence (or pride?) that opened this chapter can be corroborated from sources considerably closer to the event. The *rhētor* and historiographer Niketas Choniates referred to Theodore Laskaris, before his acclamation as emperor, as 'lord of the eastern cities', thus emphasising the role of the *poleis*.[7] He also provides us with a short description of Laskaris' political conduct regarding these cities: 'You travel to the eastern cities and negotiate with their citizens,' Choniates wrote:

> you point out the impending danger if they do not become your subjects right away. These you rebuke, those you reprimand. Soon you address a public assembly, soon you privately receive the nobles and invite them to dine, and you show them your great experience and intricate knowledge [of the circumstances], if only in that manner you raise the low spirits of the Rhomaioi.[8]

Addressing assemblies publicly, meeting civic notables privately: this aptly highlights the tools available to those who thought to control civic discourse in the late Byzantine world; they are discernible in the sources throughout the Palaiologan period.

As suggested by these initial observations, it appears that the discursive description of the Empire as a conglomerate of cities virtually reappeared from the very moment that the Queen-City, Constantinople, was lost.[9] While later events, like the oft-quoted Catalan wars in the first decade of the fourteenth century, without doubt contributed to the notion of the 'walled town' as a self-sustaining community,[10] the possibility of imagining the Empire as consisting of a network, or 'archipelago', of cities had already been there for quite some time.[11]

In a world of 'small-state complexities',[12] frequently torn apart by rebellions, religious strife and outright civil wars, competing legitimacies and loyalties posed a severe challenge to civic concord (ὁμόνοια) and peace over the smallest incident. No governor (κεφαλή) who came under pressure from both sides – above and below, as it were: from the imperial power, on the one hand, and his own citizens, on the other – could be sure of retaining control over affairs if the tables turned. In Kantakouzenos' apposite words:

> Each of the lords over the cities will be put under pressure by their own citizens, and fearing the fickleness of fortune and not knowing to whom of the emperors the empire will fall, they will hand over their cities to the one who appears stronger at the moment.[13]

One form of – more often than not, ritualised – communication that re-emerged in Palaiologan civic communities to address this need for concord was public assemblies (ἐκκλησίαι).[14] Normally, unless things went terribly wrong, the common people, the *dēmos*, could be relied on to swing along with what their social betters had decided; rather than a 'democratic' practice, such public assemblies were yet another means of visualising and performing power. Describing with hindsight

the situation towards the end of the first civil war in 1328, the elder statesman and historiographer John Kantakouzenos explicitly stated that the *dēmos* of Epirote Edessa was dependent upon the opinion (γνώμη; other meanings include 'disposition' or 'favour') of the local lords: 'The powerful in Edessa … did not exaggerate in any way, as the populace of Edessa depended on their opinion.'[15] This ties in well with the same Kantakouzenos' telling advice that the younger Andronikos, when falling out with his grandfather in the early 1320s, should seek refuge in Adrianople because his late father, the unfortunate Michael IX (r. 1294–1320), had assembled a considerable power base there, 'and many would be rather eager and willing to take some risk for his son'.[16] Finally, the exemplary case of Bizye shows that, in the pretext of a public assembly, a pressure group of *archontes* could in fact overrule the *kephalē* if the latter lacked support from his peers: in 1344, the governor George Palaiologos preferred to withdraw to Thessalonike, thanking the assembly for being allowed to leave unharmed, rather than defect to the opposing party in the so-called second civil war.[17]

However, not only *poleis* entered the post-1204 stage of Byzantine history with renewed vigour. This was also a period when the miraculous returned to Byzantine culture (and literature).

The return of the miraculous

Accounts and collections of miracles, popular at all times, save perhaps the Komnenian and Laskarid twelfth and thirteenth centuries,[18] resurfaced in the reign of Andronikos II Palaiologos; in all likelihood, the phenomenon was tied into the restoration of Orthodoxy early in Andronikos' reign and *inter alia* served to glorify this emperor's pious rule.[19] Palaiologan authors 'refreshed' and expanded the miracle collections of shrines which had long been in use. Such was the case with Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos' account of the Pege shrine of the Theotokos – at the request of a certain Makarios, an aristocrat from Serres turned monk at the Pege – or of the miracles of St Euphrosyne the Younger.[20] Similarly, Constantine Akropolites reworked the miracle collections of the shrines of saint Theodosia, which he used not least in order to promote his own family and its imperial connections, and Saint Zotikos.[21] Somewhat further down the social ladder, Maximos the deacon, presumably of the Kosmidion monastery in the vicinity of Constantinople, rewrote the miracles of Cosmas and Damian, whereas in Trebizond, John Lazaropoulos composed his famous dossier of the miracles of the city's patron saint, Eugeneios.[22] Equally, collecting miracles began serving the purpose of creating new saints, as they testified to someone's saintly conduct:[23] the posthumous miracles of Patriarch Athanasios I, recorded by Theoktistos the Stoudite, or especially those of Gregory Palamas, as recorded by Philotheos Kokkinos, come to mind.[24]

In the present context, my interest is not with the miraculous or miracle collections *per se* but, rather, with the performative power of the miraculous in influencing or shifting civic opinion. As it happens, two pertinent instances of miraculous performances achieving, or consolidating, such shifts have come down to us, not

in late Byzantine hagiography, as one might expect, but in historiography. The somewhat fluid boundaries between the genres, or, more precisely, the inclusion of hagiographical elements into other genres, have previously been noted with regard to the Palaiologan period.[25] By contrast, eleventh- and twelfth-century historiographers such as Michael Attaleiates, John Skylitzes, John Kinnamos, Anna Komnene and Niketas Choniates did not pay much attention to matters miraculous. On the contrary, Michael Psellos ridiculed Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos for believing that a miracle had occurred at his late wife, the Empress Zoe's, tomb when 'by a trick of nature some fungus sprang up' in a place where the silver covering a column of the tomb had cracked and moisture had crept in.[26] In the later thirteenth century, George Akropolites openly contested the view that St Demetrios had helped the besieged Thessalonians by killing the Bulgarian king Kalojan (John) in 1207, denigrating the saint quite bluntly.[27] There was, then, a considerable change of attitude in the days of the elder Andronikos.

By analysing these two instances, this chapter attempts to illuminate how this return of the miraculous could be exploited by shrewd politicians to achieve civic goals, and how such performances were recorded by contemporary historiographers (either believing or unbelieving). The first example comes from George Pachymeres' *Histories* and looks at Magnesia in the early fourteenth century (AD 1303). My second example derives from John Kantakouzenos' *History* and scrutinises Andronikos III's entry into Thessalonike in January 1328. What is primarily effected in both instances is civic unity in a critical situation. One of our authors, George Pachymeres, was observing and, possibly, believing in the miraculous occurrences he narrated; the other, John Kantakouzenos, was involved (I believe) in the staging of the spectacular miraculous cure he described in detail.

In analysing these episodes as social performances, I once again borrow my terminology from Jeffrey C. Alexander's work on social performances in the public and political spheres.[28] Drawing on performance theory, Alexander defines the elements of public performance as follows:[29] (1) the script and its cultural background; (2) the actors; (3) the audience; (4) the means of symbolic production and *mise-en-scène*; and, finally, (5) the distribution of social power. Adapting Austin's well-known analysis of speech-acts, Alexander suggests that social performances are judged as either successful or unsuccessful (infelicitous). Success comes when the audience experiences an authentic re-fusion – or even flow – of the 'increasingly disentangled' elements of performance: '[i]n a fused performance, audiences identify with actors, and cultural scripts achieve verisimilitude through effective *mise-en-scène*'.[30]

In this context, it is especially the distribution of social power that warrants a closer look: the two instances here presented are, to the best of my knowledge, the only ones from the Early Palaiologan period with a top-to-bottom structure performed before an audience, in contrast to the more common bottom-to-top structure, in which a 'private' individual, often of low social rank,[31] becomes the subject of a miraculous healing (often without any immediate audience). While this chapter does not intend to enter the discussion as to whether medieval miracles were 'real' or 'imagined',[32] it cannot be excluded that, for the just-mentioned structural

reason, the two miracles here discussed, unless merely literary performances, may actually have been staged performances of the miraculous. In this sense, this chapter suggests strategies for deciphering the codes of Late Byzantine historiography while at the same time exploring how local elites, the so-called *archontes*, and occasionally even rival emperors, could hope to manipulate civic opinion by means of miraculous (social) performances.

Case study I: Magnesia, 1303

The first case study is set in the city of Magnesia in the Maeander region. Not long before a residence of emperors and safeguard of the imperial mint,[33] close to Ephesos and in proximity to the (Laskarid) summer palace at Nymphaion, by 1303, the city was in imminent danger of falling to the advancing Turks.

   In this context, Pachymeres relates the following episode (for a draft translation of the Greek text, cf. Appendix I.1): In the winter of 1302/03, during his ill-fated campaign against the Ottomans,[34] co-emperor Michael IX and his bunch of Alan mercenaries hurriedly left Magnesia behind in night, in snow and, most importantly, in desperation. Some time later, the worry-stricken captain of the castle (*kastrophylax*), who remains anonymous, observed at night a flaming torch going round the walls of the town, not once or twice, but thrice. The *kastrophylax* did not fail to alert an appropriately wide-ranging audience: 'When naturally he shared this with the notables, he led them, too, to similar astonishment (ἔκπληξιν).' The audience subsequently expanded further. None of those present, however, was capable of explaining the strange phenomenon. At this stage the *kastrophylax*'s brother, known to all as deaf and dumb since the day of his birth, was brought into play: in fact, he emerges as the key actor. He was the only one, one hears, who was able to see the blazing torch for what it really was: 'a man in imperial attire'. The imperial apparition turned out to be St John the Merciful, or Almsgiver – the former Emperor John III Batatzes – who, by means of his mere presence, seemed to offer his protection and encourage the townspeople to defend their city.[35] In the end, those who witnessed this manifestation 'believed themselves protected by God'. The initial desperation was gone. It is evident that this episode represents a piece of pro-Laskarid propaganda;[36] it was also a social performance which felicitously achieved its aims and a shift in civic spirits.

   Pachymeres' careful description allows us to infer what such a social performance evoking the 'miraculous' needed to observe in order to be judged felicitous in an early fourteenth-century provincial town. The elements of performance were as follows.

- *Background symbols/foreground script*: a miracle setting evoking/vested with spiritual power (reiterating and adapting background scripts/symbols that had been established since late antiquity in times of danger – in this particular case, protective processions around the walls of a city).[37]
- *The actors*: the principal actors are the anonymous captain of the castle and his – allegedly – deaf and dumb brother. Also, the *epi tēs trapezēs* Michael

Doukas Philanthropenos is singled out by Pachymeres as an important witness, and thus perhaps his source for this occurrence.[38]

- *The audience*: first, the local elite, the *archontes* (τοῖς προέχουσι); later, the common townsfolk. It remains somewhat unclear whether common folk were already included among the 'others' (ἄλλοι, 439.10; σὺν πολλοῖς δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις, 439.28) who were sent to investigate the apparition, or merely learnt of the miracle in the end (προσπαίει δὲ πᾶσιν, 441.11).
- *The means of performance*: a flaming torch; a saintly figure in imperial attire (not seen by anybody but one witness).
- *The mise-en-scène*: a stormy night, with limited visibility.
- Finally, *the distribution of power*: suspiciously, the performative script follows a top-to-bottom structure: from the *kastrophylax* and the local notables down to the common townspeople, rather than the far more common bottom-to-top structure.

This last observation provides a convenient point of departure for further considerations. For the present purpose, it does not matter what 'really happened' that night, whether the whole story is fiction or whether some sort of performance was indeed staged (a tempting thought): what renders this episode suspicious above all is its top-to-bottom structure. The only *archōn* whose name is mentioned – presumably detached from the imperial court –, the *epi tēs trapezēs* Philanthropenos, is explicitly singled out as 'a man embellished with nobility, old age, sagacity, and experience in matters of warfare': it would certainly not have been beyond such a mind to conceive the sort of performance that made its way into Pachymeres' *Histories*. One notes that Pachymeres himself expressed his doubts about the proceedings at Magnesia; he found the miracle difficult to believe and was about to omit it (ἄπιστον δ' ἀκοῦσαι, ᾧ δὴ καὶ αὐτὸς διηπίστησα ἄν, κἂν δι' αὐτὸ καὶ παρέλιπον) – but did narrate it, he says, because it came on such good authority.[39]

Two contextualising observations help throw further light on this. First, as indicated previously, it is important to note that supernatural occurrences are attested elsewhere by Pachymeres. Yet while he refers to supernatural portents and divine omens on a number of occasions, healing miracles are limited to three instances. Intriguingly, all of them occur in the very same book of the *Histories*, in Chapters XI.10, XI.15, and XI.32.[40] The former two are connected with Michael IX's 1302/03 campaign against the Turks – the one just discussed, and the other benefiting the junior emperor (XI.10) – and the last is set in Constantinople in 1306, where at the time Andronikos II was facing considerable opposition.[41]

In Chapter XI.10, Pachymeres describes a miraculous healing of Michael IX himself.[42] In August 1303, the junior emperor, unable to reach Pergamon, retreated to Kyzikos and thence to Pegai; there he fell so ill that he felt his end approaching. With great difficulty, he sent a letter to his father in Constantinople, describing his symptoms in detail. The senior emperor duly dispatched his doctors, some of his *oikeioi* and holy oil from the shrine of the Theotokos Hodegetria, together with one of the monastery's monks (who remains anonymous).[43] In a dream, Michael already on his deathbed (ἤδη νεκρός) saw the Theotokos approaching,

who alerted him to the monk's arrival. The emperor called on his entourage: 'See,' he said, whether a monk who has just landed is resting on our shore and brings gifts from the Mother of God.'[44] The monk was duly identified and the junior emperor's life saved due to the Theotokos' intervention: the suffering and despondency were ripped from his body like a nail (ἧλον). The emperor's miraculous recovery happened 'amidst immense enthusiasm and with wonder' (ἐν ὅτι πλείστῳ τῷ θειασμῷ γενομένῃ καὶ μετὰ θαύματος).[45] The narrative structure and context of this healing miracle are very different from Chapter XI.15: although some courtiers were present, no audience is explicitly mentioned and, judging by Pachymeres' account, the miracle was not tied into civic circumstances: unlike the appearance of John Batatzes in Chapter XI.15, Michael IX's recovery in Chapter XI.10 is not expressly linked with a heartening of the citizens of Pegai, or of the emperor's army. Judging by paratextual markers, Pachymeres himself appears to have accorded less significance to this event than to the other two: the rubrics of Chapters XI.15 and XI.32 refer to the miraculous events described in the chapters,[46] while the heading for Chapter XI.10 merely reads: 'About the emperor Michael's retreat to Kyzikos, then Pegai.'[47]

The miracle described in Chapter XI.32, by contrast, lends itself to direct comparison with the Magnesia episode, as it describes an almost identical healing miracle. This final instance – for a complete translation, cf. Appendix I.2 – observes the far more common bottom-to-top structure: a 'deaf and dumb' adolescent (νεανίας) received a calling to the church of St Theodosia in Constantinople,[48] where he was miraculously cured, first by a vision of the saint herself and subsequently, and lastingly, by means of a fire miracle. In the event, the young man himself reported the story to the emperor, the elder Andronikos Palaiologos, who led an enthusiastic crowd in procession to praise the saint in a night-long vigil. This episode follows the typical structure that such miracles assume in most Palaiologan dossiers of healing miracles, e.g. those of Patriarch Athanasios I:[49] the former patriarch appeared in a dream to a young man called Manuel Bourdes, who lived in the Kynegoi quarter of Constantinople. He carried an enormous apple inscribed with the letter Alpha; to his right was the Theotokos who admonished the patriarch not to give the apple to the boy until he had performed a great many supplications. In the end, Bourdes was healed and 'became a fervent herald of the miracle and up to now has refused to remain silent, proclaiming the works of God and openly celebrating His mighty deeds'.[50]

Second, while healing miracles of deafness and dumbness are by no means uncommon in late Byzantine hagiography and miracle collections, they generally seem to be void of political implications, with the possible exception of Kokkinos' detailed attention paid to the miracles Palamas performed for the family of the *hetaireiarchēs* Andronikos Tzimiskes from Berrhoia, who subsequently changed his allegiance from the anti-Palamite to the Palamite camp.[51]

Yet it is the opposing narrative structures of Chapters XI.15 and XI.32 – top-to-bottom and bottom-to-top – which make for the most interesting effect. Did contemporaries, one wonders, perceive the connection between these two performances, which Pachymeres established by means of their juxtaposition in

his narrative? More importantly perhaps, did such a connection ever exist outside this literary representation? Did the anti-Palaiologan instance (Chapter XI.15) become permissible to be included in Pachymeres' narrative as it was framed by two pro-Palaiologan miraculous occurrences (Chapters XI.10 and XI.32)? Or did, by contrast, the anti-Palaiologan instance, in Magnesia – spatially beyond the grasp of the primarily Constantinopolitan audience for whom Pachymeres wrote – gain reaffirmation and an increasing claim to authenticity by being sandwiched between two accounts of pro-Palaiologan miracles, especially the structurally almost parallel episode which featured a ruling, Palaiologan emperor, Andronikos II, the saintly patriarch Athanasios I, and the clergy of the Great Church among its actors?

Did the Palaiologoi – in similarly critical times – hope to imitate, and emulate, the effect the *archontes* at Magnesia had achieved with their performance, by staging a similar performance in their city, Constantinople? There is some circumstantial evidence in support of the assumption that the Palaiologan court assigned some significance to this miraculous performance: one of Andronikos II's leading courtiers, the *megas logothetēs* Constantine Akropolites, son of George Akropolites, who was also one of the day's most prolific hagiographers, composed, or perhaps was commissioned to compose, an updated encomium of Saint Theodosia, expanding the saint's posthumous miracle account to his day.[52] A mere coincidence? Or is this, as the evidence would suggest, Palaiologan court propaganda at work?

Case study II: Thessalonike, January 1328

From the church of St Theodosia in Constantinople, this chapter returns to civic discourse and moves on to the social drama of the so-called first civil war, which raged intermittently from 1321 to 1328 between Andronikos II Palaiologos and his grandson of the same name, Andronikos III.[53] This second case study scrutinises the younger Andronikos' progress to Thessalonike in January 1328, as (decades) later recollected by his 'friend' and eventual successor, John Kantakouzenos. Among the healings of imperial figures in late Byzantine sources, this one stands out for its immediate political impact.

First, a brief account of what happened, according to – and this is important to keep in mind – Kantakouzenos (for a draft translation of the Greek text, cf. Appendix II.1).[54] A certain Philommates came to Andronikos III's camp in Zichna to persuade him that the hour was good to claim Thessalonike.[55] At the same time, rumours spread in Thessalonike that the young Andronikos had detached two messengers to facilitate this move; the next day, the metropolitan[56] – it is particularly this bit of the story that does not seem to add up – went out to the Chortaïtes monastery in order to intercept them, while the *kephalē*, George Choumnos,[57] decided – rather counterintuitively – to wait in front of, rather than sheltered behind, the eastern city gate. In the event, the metropolitan, allegedly unexpectedly, encountered the younger emperor himself charging towards the city (rather than the two envoys he expected). In the ensuing confusion – and greatly helped by

Choumnos waiting outside the gates – Andronikos III and his supporters managed to take the city, with those loyal to the elder emperor seeking refuge in the akropolis. However, the situation remained unstable, even dangerous: the elder Andronikos' army was not far away at Serres and about to send reinforcements, and the akropolis remained under enemy control. What emerges from between the lines is that, while the majority of citizens may have supported Andronikos III's cause, there was no unanimity: the atmosphere was heated, veering towards outbreaks of violence. In these circumstances, before laying serious siege to the akropolis, Kantakouzenos reports that Andronikos III decided to visit the 'shrine', i.e. the basilica, of St Demetrios. There – or so Kantakouzenos would have us, and in all likelihood his contemporary audience as well, believe – the emperor's foot was miraculously cured by being anointed with the saint's *myron*. It had been wounded 14 months earlier when the emperor waged war against the Turks. The young emperor's performance – for he himself was the principal actor – must have been felicitous and its authenticity beyond question (or again, so Kantakouzenos would make us believe) for the whole city erupted into chants to glorify their patron saint.

The next day, the previously tense situation had clearly been resolved (again, according to Kantakouzenos): only now the whole city joined Andronikos III's party eagerly (προθύμως). And only after this performative boost of civic community, the authority of the captain of the akropolis, a man called George Lyzikos,[58] was challenged by those under his command. It was questioned, interestingly, on the grounds that Lyzikos was not a citizen of Thessalonike, but of another city (ἑτέρας ὄντα πόλεως πολίτην), and therefore should not interfere with the city's business. He was finally forced to leave the akropolis together with those still loyal to the elder Andronikos; the others submitted themselves to the younger emperor.

It is illuminating to compare Kantakouzenos' account with Gregoras' version of the same events (for a translation of the core passages, cf. Appendix II.2).[59] In the latter's *Roman History*, the anonymous metropolitan clandestinely supported the party of Andronikos III from the very beginning; Andronikos sneaked into the city in disguise;[60] once inside, he revealed his imperial garments; almost the whole city (μικροῦ πᾶσα ἡ πόλις) prostrated themselves and chanted acclamations (εὐφήμοις … φωναῖς). No mention whatsoever is made of St Demetrios; no 300-strong army is detached to reinforce the akropolis. The next day, the akropolis was taken by sheer force: there is equally no mention of an alliance of Thessalonians denying Lyzikos' right to make any decisions on the city's behalf. Of course, Gregoras, unlike Kantakouzenos, was not an eye-witness to the events, but the different thrust of his account is clear: Gregoras, the Constantinopolitan polymath, probably writing some time after the event and possibly at a time when he had become alienated from Kantakouzenos,[61] did not see any need to create a literary performance of civic unity. Gregoras' counter-account throws the focus of Kantakouzenos' version and the sense of community allegedly achieved by Andronikos III's miraculous cure into sharp relief. In any case we are, again, entitled to read the story along the lines of Pachymeres' Magnesia episode: the narrative (fictional or not) allows us to decipher what a performance needed to feature in order to pass as felicitous or authentic.

In this particular instance, however, it should be noted that, while frequently referring to God's judgement and wrath, Kantakouzenos, unlike Pachymeres, was not in the habit of weaving miracles into his *History*.[62] Thus one may rather more legitimately wonder whether the young emperor and his shrewd 'public relations manager', Kantakouzenos, may indeed have staged a performance, or whether they consciously decided (at least) to exploit whatever may have occurred to their political advantage.[63] This possibly reveals this episode as a literary strategy: seeking to achieve unity at least in writing, by drawing on the miraculous. Whatever the case, in Kantakouzenos' literary representation, it worked rather well.

St Demetrios was a saint of decidedly pro-Palaiologan tendencies, just as much as St John the Merciful at Magnesia was a decidedly anti-Palaiologan saint. In her seminal study scrutinising the political aspects of the cult of St Demetrios in the thirteenth century, Macrides points to two instances in which the patron saint of Thessalonike, or rather his *myron*, was exploited politically – both times in favour of the local, Epirote Angeloi, dynasty, and against the Laskaris clan.[64] In such constellations, the Palaiologoi were the natural heirs to the Angeloi; as is well known, the family monastery of the Palaiologoi in Constantinople was dedicated to St Demetrios.

There is, finally, further evidence of a particularly close connection between Andronikos III and St Demetrios. The emperor innovated with respect to the saint's invocation on imperial coinage and became the first Palaiologan emperor to present himself next to the saint on silver coins minted in the capital, Constantinople. Previous emperors had issued coins featuring the saint exclusively from the Thessalonian mint.[65]

Conclusion

Both case studies have offered examples of how a miraculous performance brought about civic unity. The fragmented society of the late Byzantine world was quite literally defused;[66] it fell to social performances one way or another, and the literary representations thereof, to at least attempt to re-fuse these centrifugal interests and parties. In this sense, a telling example of a miraculous performance that pacified an urban crowd is preserved in Philotheos Kokkinos' *Life of Isidore Boucheir*. When Isidore's friend, Nicholas from Monemvasia,[67] left Constantinople to visit Kantakouzenos, the Palaiologan faction who could not get hold of the man himself raised an angry mob in order to destroy his house. In this situation, Isidore, deeply enraged by this unlawful action (a sentiment seemingly shared by his hagiographer, Kokkinos)[68] evoked the help of the Theotokos:

> When he had just taken a small portion of bread with his hands and stamped it, as is the custom, with the name of the Mother of God and consecrated it with her invocation, he placed his dear and greatest weapon as a protection and defence, as it were, to the house, that had already been given up as hopeless by almost everyone else; he said: 'I trust in my Christ that nothing horrible will meet you and nothing that depends on her [i.e. the Theotokos'] impregnable protection and command.' Isidore spoke thus; and this was what

was immediately accomplished. And more importantly, lest it seems to some that what happened regarding the house happened simply from coincidence and not as a miracle of the queen [i.e. the Theotokos] through the prayers of the great man: the *dēmos* rushed forward with wrath and arms when the demagogues and leaders of this riot gave the signal (as is customary); after they had come close to the house and were already almost at the gates, they recovered their senses and disbanded thanks to the divine power of the protectress and commander, like the flow of a torrent that strangely shoots up or waves of the raging sea that rise to equal heights with mountains of the neighbouring land, but are strangely dissolved by beaches and sand into foam with little power by the order of the lord.[69]

The thrust is rather different here, in that Isidore's miracle pacified the crowd without the latter actively witnessing any miraculous performance. Yet this miracle is still indicative of the power that contemporaries ascribed to the miraculous in managing an unruly *dēmos*. As Angeliki Laiou concluded: 'and it is, perhaps, significant that in his [Kokkinos'] eyes, only miracles could be invoked against the irrational actions of the "mob" '.[70] Or, to put it differently, at a time when the voice of reason was rarely heard, the miraculous in particular held the power to re-fuse fragmented civic communities.

And while this is not the place to explore to what degree the Early Palaiologan revival can be compared with the almost contemporary Early Italian Renaissance – civic discourse would, in fact, be one such matter[71] – one may in conclusion draw attention to Niccolò Machiavelli's fine observation:[72]

> They [i.e. the rulers of a republic or kingdom] should also foster and encourage everything likely to be of help to this end [i.e. to keep their commonwealth religious, and in consequence, good and united], even though they be convinced that it is quite fallacious. . . . It was owing to wise men having taken due note of this that belief in miracles arose and that miracles are held in high esteem even by religions that are false; for to whatever they owed their origin, sensible men made much of them, and their authority caused everybody to believe in them.[73]

Even if the *archontes* of Magnesia, John Kantakouzenos or the younger emperor Andronikos had known Machiavelli's advice, they could hardly have performed any better.[74]

Appendix I.1: Translation of George Pachymeres, *Histories*, XI.15, ed. A. Failler, 4: 439–41

About the prodigious miracle in Magnesia

It remains for me to expound a miraculous occurrence performed in our days; awe-inspiring to narrate and incredible to the ear. I myself would not have believed it (and would therefore have omitted it [from my narrative]), if not for the word of

many and trustworthy men. It offers an example of God's providence and ongoing solicitude for the utterly human race, even if otherwise the divine intention works profoundly and beyond our perception, and at the same time of the glory of an emperor of virtuous reputation,[75] while God judges in every respect the error and achievements of men by their deeds and by which means alone they pursue them. We have already narrated how the emperor [Michael IX] departed from Magnesia on the Hermos.[76] Others were in charge of it following the emperor's departure, one of them the *epi trapezēs* Philanthropenos, a man in every respect adorned by noble birth, age, reason, and battlefield experience. When at any rate the town was entrusted to a *kastrophylax*,[77] the latter was still awake late at night when it was already time for the watch; he saw a flaming torch that made its way around the city. When this happened two or three times, it caught the *kastrophylax*'s attention. When naturally he shared this with the notables, he led them, too, to similar astonishment. Meanwhile they wished to know what this might be: and also others were sent in order to investigate, but no more of what was happening was revealed to them. Together with these many others the *kastrophylax*'s brother went out, whom everybody knew to have been deaf and dumb from birth. And while for them it was not possible to learn anything beyond the common, to him that wondrous and mysterious marvel was unveiled. And the proof was adduced by the miracle worked on him: for by speaking from being deaf and dumb he rendered credible and not to be opposed whatever he might say. That one saw, when he stayed for a while, not a flaming torch but a man dressed in imperial garments, who disregarded their watch, as it were, but said that he himself had the stewardship of their watch. And at the same time that, when he spoke, he spoke as if to someone who listens: and the deaf one heard immediately! And that the voice ordered him to give orders with a loud voice to the guards to be as alert as possible to ensure their salvation. And one miracle immediately followed the other miracle: for the one who had heard what to do was already also heard speaking, and by speaking he showed his words as trustworthy. The stewardship, as the Lydian might say,[78] of that merciful emperor John, in which they trusted for their protection by God, came to everyone's ears.

Appendix I.2: Translation of George Pachymeres, *Histories*, XI.32, ed. Failler, 4: 497–501

The marvel performed by the holy blessed martyr Theodosia

In this year, too, a marvellous miracle of the blessed martyr Theodosia was performed; no small danger will come to me, who records these events – the deeds of God are worthy of announcing! – from not reporting it, and no small penalty for those who listen [to my account]. That what is said will in every respect investigate God's providence thoroughly, and offer a token of the Almighty's solicitude for us. A young man from the City of Constantine had been deaf and dumb for many years, and the suffering confined him who was left wanting for his livelihood to a life as a servant, through which he was provided with the necessary things, even if he was not stable in his service to one master, but changed masters. He served among others also a certain Pegonites, who lived very close to the rather

conspicuous church of the Heralds of God: in a dream, the virgin martyr appeared to him [the young man] and ordered him to approach the church that was hers in every respect, with a candle and offering. He woke and, asking for that which had been announced by means of gestures only and receiving it, as those who could hear understood [his request], he approached the church and implored adequately and, having rubbed himself with the light-bringing oil, falling at her feet according to custom, he became a suppliant to the martyr.

Returning from the church, it seemed that his ear was unwell. When he had scratched it repeatedly with his finger, immediately a small living winged animal, as it seemed, fell out from there which – when he handled it in wonder and prepared to ward it off – immediately disappeared. However, the lurking pain seemed to grow easier, and he was full of good hope: but he reached the house suffering again from similar pain. And those [his fellow servants in Pegonites' house], as previously, beckoned him to kindle a fire while they were kneading the flour, and falling to his knees he *blew shrilly*. But no *flame arose* and no *fire kindled by a god roared*, as in the poem, only smoke was smouldering, and he laboured uselessly and became aggrieved. After many attempts the fire did not obey; his breathing was changed into words and he bursts into a voice: for he curses the hearth, curses the whole not to ever kindle and turn into a flame, shouting loudly from deep within: which, naturally, did not remain hidden from those in the house. However, when they heard this they were astonished, and not trusting themselves they believed either of two: either that the fire had sent forth the voice or indeed that the one who had up to that point been dumb and whom they did not know to ever have sent forth a voice [had sent forth the voice]. As in their examination whose voice this was and what had been said they were shouting from afar, the dumb young man heard this and testified for himself that he, because he himself heard the examiners, was also the one who himself cursed the fire with his own mouth. And immediately those standing near realised this awe-inspiring marvel, passed on the word, and the event became well known to all.

The miracle then also reached the emperor, and they brought the one who had been dumb and deaf to him, as was ordered; the patriarch was also present. The young man, when being asked, announced all [that had happened] from the very beginning, narrating it himself with his own voice. Therefore, as the ruler did not judge it just to pass over this event in silence, an all-night vigil was announced on the spot in honour of the martyr, with even the emperor himself not being absent from the celebration. Much rather, as the latter wished to accord honour to the miracle-worker, he left it to the others to make their way as they wished, but he himself together with the whole senate and the patriarch, at nightfall went by foot to the church and attended to the martyr.

Appendix II.1: Translation of John Kantakouzenos, *History*, I.53, ed. Schopen, 1: 267–72

While affairs were in this state, Philommates came to the emperor [Andronikos III] from Thessalonike; he was sent by those who pursued the matter of the young emperor there and announced that all other matters were well and that, if the

emperor came now, he would take the city without any toil. When the emperor learnt this, he selected the pack animals, baggage and of the soldiers those who did not have possession of stout horses fit for war, and left them in Zichna with the *megas papias* Tzamplakon and a few others. He himself, together with the *megas domestikos* and the other leaders, taking with himself the host [he had] selected [to accompany him], seemed to set out against Drama in order to lay siege against it.[79] But when the night came, he turned from the road on which he was travelling, and marched against Thessalonike through the Strymon.[80] When he had crossed the river, at Marmarion, he ordered his host to have a short rest,[81] with everybody dismounting from their horses. Rested, they again took to the same road, travelling the following day as well as the night that followed that day, and at dawn on the third day they reached the Chortaïtes monastery.[82]

On the previous day a rumour had made its rounds through Thessalonike, that the young emperor had taken Zichna, that had joined his cause, and having reached Serres, had the [old emperor's] western army together with the latter's [268] Serbian allies enclosed inside its walls, and they were not able to withstand him. [The rumour said further that] after his return to Zichna, the young emperor sent the *parakoimōmenos* Apokaukos and Alexios Palaiologos here [i.e. Thessalonike], under the pretext that they served as ambassadors to the one who governed Thessalonike, the *megas stratopedarchēs* Choumnos, and the metropolitan; yet in truth to hold secret converse with those who pursued their matter [in the city] and at the same time to spy out, if it were possible to bring Thessalonike under the younger emperor's power. Such things were spread by the rumour.

Choumnos sought hard to find out who brought such tidings, but was not able to [do so]. However, it seemed advantageous to him and the metropolitan that the latter, having made his way to Chortaïtes the following day, should order Alexios Palaiologos and the *parakoimōmenos* Apokaukos, if those things that were reported about them were true, to return to the emperor, because entry to Thessalonike would not be granted to them. And [that he should] announce to them in advance that if they did not comply and forced their entry, that those who wanted Thessalonike to defect from the [older] emperor would be prevented from plotting with them. Such actions they devised in response to what they had heard. At dawn the following day, the metropolitan travelled the road towards the Chortaïtes monastery according to plan; Choumnos, on the other hand, having exited with his entourage through the so-called Gate of the Asomatoi, stood to observe the events; and the whole city was in suspense with regard to the rumours. Those to whom it seemed right to support the cause of the young emperor [269] had been ordered not to wear weapons or use horses, but either to stay at home or to come out without weapons and on foot. Then these, with the news of the young emperor reported from everywhere, climbed unarmed onto the walls of the same gate and awaited the outcome of the events.

When the metropolitan came close to the Chortaïtes monastery and unexpectedly encountered the young emperor, he was utterly astonished and cursed the emperor's ill-timed arrival; when the emperor addressed him, he was bewildered by the sudden danger and did not return the salute, but returned to the city as quickly as he could in order to announce the emperor's approach. And the emperor

followed him, advancing quickly. The members of the emperor's party who stood on the walls, when they recognised from the standards that the emperor was approaching, attacked those outside the gates with renewed courage by throwing stones from the walls: those – with the enemies coming against from outside and those on the inside clearly turning into enemies, too – did not know what to do and moved inside the walls and closed the gates. But since they were unable to withstand against those who were throwing [stones] from the walls, they turned to flight and reaching the akropolis they occupied it, in order to defend themselves from there. Its commander was George Lyzikos from Berrhoia.

Those on the walls, once they had climbed down and opened the gates, welcomed the emperor. And the whole city was well-inclined to the emperor, and all came to welcome him. The emperor who feared that an army, if it arrived from Serres, would make the akropolis difficult [270] to conquer, selected an army which he believed sufficient for the task and ordered it to guard the akropolis, lest anybody enter it. When those in Serres [the supporters of the old emperor] learnt that the [young] emperor [had] entered Thessalonike, they feared that it might surrender to him, which indeed happened; they sent three hundred chosen soldiers in order to hold the akropolis and offer those in the city the courage to withstand the [young] emperor. But when those whom the young emperor had assigned to guard the akropolis clashed in battle with them, they routed them completely and killed some of them; others they captured alive. The [young] emperor, once he had seen to setting a watch for the akropolis, went into the holy shrine of the myrrh-giving martyr Demetrios in order to venerate him (for from a young age he offered greater honour and faith to Demetrios than to the other martyrs and was his follower, as it were) and at the same time to give thanks for his present good fortunes. And when he had venerated and thanked St Demetrios, he intended to apply the martyr's myrrh to his foot once he had taken off his shoe (he had occurred a wound to his foot from his battle against the Turks – and for fourteen months it proved incapable of healing even though the physicians attempted many a cure, but becoming gangrenous it gave him unbearable pain), as he believed that those feats which human craft and diligence could not accomplish, these God granted his holy martyrs to accomplish. When the emperor had undressed his foot [271] and removed the bandages with which it was bound – oh, what great care of God for his martyrs! The bandage was found ripped on the outside but the foot was healthy to such a degree that no trace of a scar or wound appeared, that it was impossible to know if it had ever been wounded! When the emperor saw this, he took more delight in it than in the fact that Thessalonike had submitted to him, and therefore gave more and warmer expressions of gratitude. And the whole city, when they learnt of the miracle worked on the emperor, sang hymns to God and to Demetrios, His servant.

As the day came to an end, the emperor left the shrine and made his way to the palace; there he spent the night. But the next morning the emperor himself in full armour and his host, together with the whole populace of Thessalonike who eagerly joined the expedition, marched against the akropolis so as, if those who occupied it would not yield it voluntarily, to force them with arms. Initially the emperor sent [a messenger]; he addressed those inside and called on them to hand over the akropolis without a fight, offering an amnesty and promising that

they would fare well. But they did not obey, but confirmed their decision and took up position to defend the wall. And for three or four hours they defended themselves valiantly from the walls. Thereafter, those in the akropolis who were not completely inclined towards the elder emperor's cause found themselves at variance in their opinion with the others, and demanding a cessation [272] of the battle against the [younger] emperor, they embarked on a discussion with those who were besieged alongside them. And they argued not to permit Lyzikos to give counsel regarding their fatherland, as he was the citizen of another *polis*, whom his relatives – since Berrhoia sided with the [younger] emperor – would ask to be released, if he caused any offence; and they said to the others that it was not just and advantageous if every other *polis* sided with the [younger] emperor, that they resisted and continued fighting. For they were not capable of defending themselves and the akropolis, being cut off by themselves, since those from Serres who came to join them in battle had been defeated and others would not dare to come. 'The [younger] emperor's host is great and sufficient for battle, and furthermore the whole city besieging us with every man will force us to capitulate. Even if we will be able to resist for a short while, we will be punished from both ends. For if we win, we will kill our friends and those closest to us; if we lose, we meet certain death; which is all not agreeable to us. If this seems good to you [this is what we shall do]; but if not, we shall put ourselves and the akropolis into the emperor's hands.'

These said such things; Lyzikos and whoever was loyal to the elder emperor, not knowing what to do, asked together with the others for forgiveness, if they had offended the [younger] emperor, and having received it, they handed over the akropolis.

Appendix II.2: Partial translation of Nikephoros Gregoras, *Roman History*, IX.4.3, ed. Schopen and Bekker, 1: 409.6–11 and 410.2–17

In the following month of December, letters from the Thessalonians were sent in secret to the young emperor; they invited him to come at the earliest opportunity. For [they said that] there was consent among the common people, the majority of the notables and indeed the archbishop himself that the very moment of the emperor's appearance before the walls, they would rush to open the gates for him …

While these men[83] were busy with such affairs between Thessalonike and Serres, the [younger] emperor secretly entered Thessalonike, concealing all imperial regalia under a commoner's garment. Once he was inside the gates, he immediately threw off that garment, and made it manifest to all that he was the emperor. And immediately almost that whole city rushed together, performed *proskynesis* before him and welcomed him with auspicious words. But there were also a few who hated him and were fiercely attached to the old emperor: these rushed to the akropolis, occupied it and safeguarded themselves behind its walls. From there, they defended themselves valiantly against those who besieged them, the [younger] emperor himself and as many members of the rebellion as had gathered around him. And they wounded many, throwing stones and shooting arrows, so

that many of the missiles from there were stuck in the emperor's shield. The following day those around the emperor collected a big pile of dry wood and set fire to the gates of the akropolis, and won it by force in this way.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 In this chapter, I use the term 'civic' to denote anything connected to the politics and citizens of a *polis*.
2 On Akropolites, see now Macrides (2007: 5–34) and *PLP* no. 518.
3 Akropolites, *History*, Chapter 6, ed. Heisenberg and Wirth, 10.17–26:

> ἀπελθὼν οὖν οὗτος μετὰ τῆς σφετέρας γυναικὸς καὶ τῶν τέκνων … καὶ περὶ τὴν Νίκαιαν πόλιν γενόμενος παρεκάλει τοὺς Νικαεῖς ἔσω τοῦτον τῆς πόλεως δέξασθαι καὶ ὡς κυρίῳ προσανέχειν αὐτῷ. οἱ δὲ οὐκ ἐδέχοντο. λιπαρῶς γοῦν ὁ Λάσκαρις τούτοις προσκείμενος καὶ κἂν τὴν γυναῖκα μόνην δέξασθαι ἐκδυσωπῶν, μόλις εἰς τοῦτο πειθηνίους ἐγνώρισεν.

> (trans. Macrides 2007: 118)

From the Greek text one gets the impression that a considerable span of time may have elapsed before Laskaris finally gained hold of Nicaea, certainly only after he had taken possession of various other Bithynian *kastra*.
4 See e.g. Laiou (2006).
5 On this discourse, see Gaul (2011: 53–210). Underlying reasons that facilitated this discourse include increasing economic prosperity that resulted in the circulation of members of the provincial urban elites through Constantinople as well as new discourses that thus emerged in classicising *paideia*.
6 Schreiner (1998).
7 Choniates, *History*, ed. van Dieten, 627.3–4: τῶν ἑῴων κρατοῦντι πόλεων; *Oration* 14, title: βασιλεύοντα τῶν ἑῴων Ῥωμαϊκῶν πόλεων. The expression is used earlier in the *History* to refer to the Anatolian parts of the Empire, e.g. van Dieten, 357.47.
8 Choniates, *Oration* 14, ed. van Dieten, 131.17–23 (dated *c.*1208):

> περιέρχῃ τὰς ἑῴας πόλεις, εἰς λόγους ἔρχῃ τοῖς ἐνοῦσι, τίθης ὑπόψια ὅσα πείσονται πάνδεινα, εἰ μή σοι πείσονται τάχιον· τούτοις ἐπιπλήττεις, ἐκείνοις ἐπιτιμᾷς· νῦν μὲν ἐκκλησιάζεις τὰ λαώδη συστήματα, νῦν δὲ παραλαμβάνων ἰδίᾳ τοὺς λογίμους καὶ συγκαλῶν ἐς συνδείπνιον πολυγύμναστος τὸ ἦθος καὶ ποικίλος τὴν γνώμην δείκνυσαι, εἴ πως ἀναθάλψεις οὕτως τὸ ἀπεσβηκὸς ἤδη τῶν Ῥωμαίων φρόνημα.

9 On the role of Constantinople as a *polis* in the twelfth century, cf. Magdalino (1993: 109–23).

10 Laiou (1972: 229–30):

> The reign of Andronicus II saw the emergence of the walled town as a self-governing and often self-financed entity ... As the central government was losing its power, it transferred authority to particular groups; the growth of particularism is a fundamental aspect of the Palaeologan period. As for the walled town, its importance increased during the last years of Byzantine rule ... The Catalan campaign, by forcing the town inhabitants to provide for their own defense, contributed to the development of local government, with the towns as a focus.

Ibid.: 170 and 192 and n131, (with earlier literature).

11 Gaul (2011: 53–61). For the expression 'archipelago', cf. Kaster (1988: 21).

12 Laiou (2006).

13 Kantakouzenos, *History*, I.21, ed. Bekker, 1:104.14–19:

> οἵ τ' ἐφεστηκότες ταῖς πόλεσιν ἡγεμόνες, ὑπό τε τῶν ἰδίων ἕκαστος πολιτῶν ἐκβιαζόμενος καὶ τὴν ἀδηλίαν δεδοικότες τῆς τύχης, οὐκ εἰδότες πρὸς ὁπότερον τῶν βασιλέων τὸ κράτος χωρήσει, τῷ δυνατωτέρῳ τὸ νῦν ἔχον φαινομένῳ καὶ αὐτοῖς ἐπικειμένῳ παραδώσουσι τὰς πόλεις.

14 Tsirpanlis (1973).

15 Kantakouzenos, *History*, I, 54, ed. Schopen, 1:274.17–24: οἱ δ' ἐν Ἐδέσσῃ δυνατοὶ … μηδεμίαν ποιησάμενοι ἀναβολήν, ἐπεὶ καὶ ὁ δῆμος Ἐδεσηνῶν τῆς αὐτῶν ἐξήρτητο γνώμης.

16 Kantakouzenos, *History*, I, 4, ed. Schopen, 1:23.25–24.2: πολλοὶ προσεγένοντο αὐτῷ οἰκεῖοι καὶ φίλοι καὶ βουλησόμενοι μάλα προθύμως ὑπὲρ τοῦ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ διακινδυνεύειν; cf. Gickler (2015, 197).

17 Kantakouzenos, *History*, III, 79, ed. Schopen, 2:490.2–9.

18 Efthymiadis (1999). With a few exceptions, such as the miracles of St Photeini, see Talbot (1994).

19 See generally Talbot (1991; 2012); Efthymiadis (1999, 2004; 2014: 125–30). Gaul (2011: 203–10) argues that this is one of many indicators of an increasingly uprooted society clinging to moral support – the so-called 'Palaiologan revival' of *paideia* would represent the reverse of the same coin.

20 Efthymiadis (2006/07).

21 Or to promote the cult through his family's standing, as Efthymiadis (2004: 241) suggests. On the miracle collection, see also Talbot (1991: 17–20). Akropolites' family standing was somewhat precarious in relation to those of similar rank; cf. Gaul (2016: 264–5).

22 Rosenqvist (1996); Efthymiadis (1999: 210–11).

23 Macrides (1981).

24 Talbot (1983; 2010). Talbot observes that Kokkinos first composed the list of Palamas' miracles as a stand-alone text, and only later integrated it into his *Life of Gregory Palamas*.

25 Efthymiadis (2004: 243–4); Gaul (2011: 318–23). In addition to historiography, Efthymiadis points to epistolography.

26 Psellos, *Chronographia*, VI, 183, ed. Reinsch, 188, trans. Sewter, 250. Anna Komnene's *Alexiad* features a few apparitions in dreams, e.g. the brief apparition in the battle of Distra of Leo the former metropolitan of Chalcedon to Anna's uncle, George Palaiologos (*Alexiad*, VII, 4.1).

27 Akropolites, *History*, Chapter 13, ed. Heisenberg and Wirth, 23.21–3, trans. Macrides (2007: 140).

28 Cf. also Gaul (2018).

29 Alexander (2006: 32–7).

30 Ibid.: 29.

31 That is not to say that Andronikos II and his family were not also repeatedly marked out as the recipients of miracles: in addition to the cases presented in this chapter, drawing on the Macedonian dossier associated with Leo VI, Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos continued to associate the Pege shrine especially with the imperial family, featuring

both wives of Andronikos II (Anna of Hungary and Yolanda of Montferrat, suffering from barrenness); the miracles of St Euphrosyne the Younger feature Michael IX. Kantakouzenos and Gregoras report Andronikos III's healing in 1340.

32 Justice (2008); cf. also Klaniczay (2013). This issue has not yet received much attention in Byzantine Studies but see now Mitrea (2018: Chapter III.1).
33 Bokody (2013).
34 Gickler (2015: 87–104).
35 According to Angelov (2007: 267), this is the earliest historical testimony for the emerging cult of St John the Merciful. Cf. also Ciolfi (2014) and, on George of Pelagonia's *Life of St John*, Ciolfi (2018). Manuel Philes' little-studied epigram on the gates of Medeia (modern Κιζικöy) ascribes a very similar effect to the one described here for those beholding an emperor's effigy – in the latter case, presumably Andronikos II and Michael IX Palaiologoi (Gaul forthcoming).
36 Cf. Angelov (2007: 267–9).
37 In general, see Skedros (2006: 83–91); Talbot (2001). In this particular case, the script evokes protective processions around the wall of a city, such as famously performed by Patriarch Sergios in 626, when he carried the *maphorion* of the Theotokos around the walls of Constantinople. See Brubaker and Wickham (forthcoming) for context and further examples.
38 *PLP* no. 29777.
39 Pachymeres, *Histories*, XI.15, ed. Failler, 4:439.11–12. Pachymeres does not always distance himself from miraculous occurrences, as Hunger (1978, 1:451) suggested: 'Pachymeres unterläßt es in der Regel nicht, auf seine persönlichen Zweifel gegenüber den angeführten Erscheinungen diskret hinzuweisen.' The fact that he adds a disclaimer in the case of the pro-Laskarid miracle but not the pro-Palaiologan ones (Chapters XI.10, XI.32) may have been a caveat. On Pachymeres as a critic, yet at the same time collaborator, of the early Palaiologoi, see Angelov (2007: 260–9). Gickler (2015: 19–22) emphasises Pachymeres' sympathies for Michael IX, his former disciple.
40 Pachymeres, *Histories*, XI.32.
41 Angelov (2007: 315–21).
42 See also Gickler (2015: 99–101).
43 Pachyeres, *Histories*, XI.10, ed. Failler, 4:427.21–429.10. The abbreviated version of Pachymeres' *Histories* adds that the monastery in question was the Hodegetria: Failler, 4: 428n78.
44 Pachymeres, *Histories*, XI.10, ed. Failler, 4:429.14–15: 'ἴδετε' λέγων 'εἰ μοναχὸς ἐπ' αἰγιαλοῦ ἀποβὰς ἵσταται φέρων καὶ δῶρα τῆς θεομήτορος'.
45 Gickler (2015: 100) compellingly describes Michael IX's suffering as a psychosomatic reaction to the failing campaign.
46 The title of Chapter XI.15 reads περὶ τοῦ κατὰ τὴν Μαγνησίαν τεραστικοῦ θαύματος and that of Chapter XI.32: τεράστιον τελεσθὲν παρὰ τῆς ἁγίας ὁσιομάρτυρος Θεοδοσίας. For the English translation, see Appendices I.1 and I.2 included in this chapter.
47 Pachymeres, *Histories*, XI.10, ed. Failler, 4:427.10–11: περὶ τῆς τοῦ βασιλέως Μιχαὴλ εἰς Κύζικον, εἶτα εἷς Πηγάς, ἀναχωρήσεως.
48 Effenberger (2011).
49 Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Miracles of Patriarch Athanasios I*, Chapters 56–57, ed. Talbot, 104–8.
50 Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Miracles of Patriarch Athanasios I*, Chapter 57, ed. Talbot, 108: κήρυξ διαπρύσιος αὐτὸς τοῦ θαύματος γίνεται, καὶ ἔτι σιγᾶν οὐ βούλεται, τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Θεοῦ κηρύττων, καὶ τὰ μεγαλεῖα διαρρήδην ὑμνῶν.
51 Kokkinos, *Life of Gregory Palamas*, Chapters 130–3, ed. Tsames, 583–6.
52 Talbot (1991: 18).
53 For social drama, see Turner (1974), especially pp. 23–59.
54 Kantakouzenos was an eyewitness to the event but did not write his *History* before his fall from power decades later, after 1354, see Hunger (1978: 1: 468).
55 *PLP* no. 29916.

56 Unfortunately, there is a prosopographical gap for this period; the name of the metropolitan is not known.

57 *PLP* no. 30945.

58 *PLP* no. 15196.

59 Gregoras, *Roman History*, IX.4.3, ed. Schopen and Bekker, 1:409.6–410.16.

60 Van Dieten (1979: 208 n222).

61 Van Dieten (1975).

62 The only other instance is Andronikos III's miraculous cure in 1340: Kantakouzenos, *History*, II.17 and II.20, ed. Schopen, 1:409–10 and 426–7. Cf. also Gregoras, *Roman History*, IX. 10.5, ed. Schopen and Bekker, 1:442.

63 Alternatively (not pursued further in this chapter), Kantakouzenos may have intended sending a message to his contemporary audience in the late 1350s and 1360s, rather than the Thessalonians in 1328.

64 Macrides (1990). However, it must not be forgotten that this was a civil war with a Palaiologos fighting a Palaiologos.

65 *DOC* 5.1:165 and 5.2: plate 48. For earlier examples, e.g. of Andronikos III's grandfather, Andronikos II, see ibid.: 5.1:157 and 5.2: plate 41.

66 Alexander (2006: 29–32).

67 *PLP* no. 20394.

68 *Life of Isidore*, 42.7–9, ed. Tsames, 380:

> and the most horrible and worst part, which frequently likes to occur in such circumstances: [this happened] not at the order and decision of judges and the hands of soldiers and those who customarily enact such punishment, but they [the leaders of the Palaiologan faction] inflamed this irrational and bold rage of the *dēmos* like a wild fire.
>
> καὶ τὸ δεινότατόν τε καὶ κάκιστον … οὐ ψήφῳ καὶ ἀποφάσει δικαστῶν καὶ στρατιωτικῇ χειρὶ καὶ τοῖς εἰωθόσι τὰ τοιαῦτα κολάζειν, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἀλόγιστον ταυτηνὶ καὶ θρασεῖαν ὁρμὴν τοῦ δήμου καθαπερεί τι πῦρ ἄγριον ἀνάπτουσι ….

69 *Life of Isidore*, 42.21–37, ed. Tsames, 380–1:

> ἄρτου τοιγαροῦν μερίδα τινὰ βραχεῖαν εὐθὺς μετὰ χεῖρας λαβὼν καὶ σφραγίσας καὶ τῷ τῆς Θεομήτορος ὡς ἔθος ὀνόματι καὶ τῇ ἐπικλήσει καθαγιάσας, τὸ φίλον αὐτῷ καὶ μέγιστον ὅπλον οἷα δὴ προφυλακτικόν τι καὶ ἀμυντήριον ἐφίστησι τῇ ἀπεγνωσμένῃ τοῖς πᾶσιν ἤδη σχεδὸν οἰκίᾳ, ‘πέποιθα τῷ ἐμῷ Χριστῷ’, φήσας, ‘ὡς οὐκ ἀπαντήσει δεινὸν οὐδὲν ὑμῖν οὐδοτιοῦν τῶν ἐπηρτημένων τῇ ταύτης ἀμάχῳ προστασίᾳ καὶ στρατηγίᾳ’. ὁ μὲν οὖν οὕτως εἶπε, τὸ δ’ ἦν εὐθὺς καὶ τετελεσμένον. καὶ τὸ μεῖζον, ἵνα μὴ καί τισι δόξῃ κατὰ συντυχίαν ἁπλῶς καὶ οὐ θαῦμα τῆς βασιλίδος ταῖς εὐχαῖς τοῦ μεγάλου γεγενῆσθαι τὸ κατὰ τὴν οἰκίαν, ὁρμῶσι μὲν ὁ δῆμος μετὰ τοῦ θυμοῦ καὶ τῶν ὅπλων, τῶν δημαγωγῶν καὶ τῆς στάσεως ἐξάρχων ὡς ἔθος τὸ σύνθημα δεδωκότων· εἶτ’ ἐγγὺς αὐτοῦ που γενόμενοι καὶ σχεδὸν πρὸς ταῖς θύραις, εἰς ἑαυτοὺς αὖθις ἐπανέρχονται καὶ διαλύονται θείᾳ τῆς προϊσταμένης τε καὶ στρατηγούσης δυνάμει καθάπερ τι χειμάρρου ῥεῦμα καινῶς ἀνατρέχον, ἢ κύματα μαινομένης θαλάσσης ἴσα μὲν καὶ ὄρεσι κατὰ τῆς γείτονος κορυφούμενα χέρσου, αἰγιαλοῖς δὲ καὶ ψάμμῳ μικρᾷ τῇ τοῦ τάξαντος δεσπότου δυνάμει καινῶς εἰς ἀφρὸν αὖθις διαλυόμενα.

70 Laiou-Thomadakis (1980: 105).

71 Gaul (2011: 197–202).

72 The late Byzantines, to the best of my knowledge, (as every so often) lack a theoretical discussion of the matter.

73 Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, I, 12.7–9:

> E debbono [= i principi d'una republica, o d'uno regno] tutte le cose che nascano in favore di quella [= mantenere la loro republica religiosa, e per conseguente buona

e unita], come que le giudicassono false, favorirle e accrescerle; e tanto più lo deb-
bono fare quanto più prudenti sono, e quanto più conoscitori delle cose naturale.
E perché questo modo è stato osservato dagli uomini savi, ne è nato l'opinione dei
miracoli che si celebrano nelle religioni eziandio false; perché i prudenti gli augu-
mentano, da qualunque principio e' si nascano, e l'autorità loro dà poi a quelli fede
appresso a qualunque.

(trans. Crick 1998: 143)

74 Yet as much as the miraculous could be exploited, it held power over the powerful, too,
as Pachymeres was acutely aware. In his account, Andronikos II, whom the historiog-
rapher characterises as 'pusillanimous, to speak the truth' (δειδήμων ὤν, ὡς τὸ ἀληθὲς
εἰπεῖν, *Histories*, VII.30, ed. Failler, 3:95.6–7), was at least twice moved to action in
the wake of divine portents: (1) the blood-weeping icon of 1284 sparked a renewed
attempt at unifying the divided church (ibid., VII.30, ed. Failler, 3:93.20–95.21);
and (2) the great earthquake of 1296 judicial reforms (ibid., IX.15–16, ed. Failler,
3:259.20–263.4).
75 The former emperor John III Batatzes (r. 1222–54).
76 Pachymeres, *Histories*, X.20, ed. Failler, 4:347.11–349.10.
77 The name of this *kastrophylax* is not known; he seems not to be identical with
Philanthropenos.
78 This must be John Lydos, but the reference does not seem to point to any of the surviv-
ing passages in the latter's oeuvre.
79 Following the military road that branched off from the Via Egnatia towards Serres,
Zichna and Drama, and rejoined the Via Egnatia at Xanthi.
80 The emperor is now following the main Via Egnatia towards Thessalonike.
81 I follow the reading of Fatouros (1976: 191), who considers the capital letter in μικρὸν
a typo.
82 The monastery was located *c.*10 miles east of Thessalonike on the slopes of a mountain
now called Chortaites.
83 These were the *despotēs* Demetrios Palaiologos, the *prōtobestiarios* Andronikos
Palaiologos and Michael Asan, members of the party of the elder emperor, Andronikos
II. They were outside the city as they suspected trouble (διὰ τὰς ὑποψίας τῶν θορύβων,
409.19) from the citizens who were largely on the side of the younger Andronikos;
Gregoras also reports that they severely disliked each other, and could not agree on any
course of action.

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2 Art in decline or art in the age of decline?

Historiography and new approaches to Late Byzantine painting

Ivana Jevtić

Despite its many faces and complexities, the Late Byzantine (1204–1453) period, also called the Palaiologan period, has been viewed largely in light of the end of the Byzantine Empire. The territorial losses and economic and military weakness that underpin the final disintegration of the Empire have persuaded many to describe the Palaiologan period as an era of decline, and its art as the epilogue of a millennium-long tradition.[1] As expected, developments in Byzantine art are often viewed in connection with the fate of the Empire. But to what extent does the waning political landscape influence the perception of Palaiologan art? Is it an art in decline or an art in (reflecting) the age of decline? This chapter takes these questions as a starting point for a nuanced approach to the study of Late Byzantine art and aims to discard the remaining stereotypes in the understanding of its artistic production. Such an inquiry is timely because Palaiologan society and culture have been studied more intensely in the past decade than in the previous half-century and the concept of decline faces opposition from the cultural vantage point.[2] Cecily J. Hilsdale, for instance, has shown how political decline reconfigured the visual culture of the Late Byzantine Empire.[3] Her work, by centring on the question, 'What does decline enable?' rather than 'What does decline diminish?', represents a constructive new approach. And this chapter takes a step in a similar direction.

The key issues with the concept of decline as well as with flourishing are the conditionality within such models and the narrow understanding of their features: how can one measure or qualify decline in art? By singling out three parameters that have long been established in art historiographies as markers of artistic development (in all its phases) – production, artists and creativity – this chapter examines selected features of Late Byzantine monumental painting and asks whether they show signs of decline. From that perspective, I argue that a lesson can be learnt from the deconstruction of another long-held paradigm – decline in art after AD 300 – in the scholarship of the past half-century. This requires evaluating a larger set of transformations reflected by these two artistic productions rather than viewing them as mere epilogues to the subsequent flourishing. By questioning the concept of decline in Palaiologan art, the aim is to foreground several artistic phenomena which demand greater consideration and to open a new discursive space for Late Byzantine art, while simultaneously raising nuances within the

'decline' trope. Considering alternative perspectives – if not decline, then what other model? – will not only lead to a richer comprehension of Late Byzantine art but also foster a revaluation of its artistic legacy that outlived the fall of the Empire in 1453.[4]

Art in decline

The perception of Late Byzantine art as the decaying art of an empire in agony evokes associations with the trope of art in decline.[5] Rooted in Renaissance perceptions of the Arch of Constantine in Rome (dedicated in 315), the paradigm dominated discussions of this monument through to and culminating in Bernard Berenson's *The Arch of Constantine: or The Decline of Form*.[6] In that art-historical tradition, the 'decline of form' was apparent in the reuse of older reliefs, a practice seen as a sign of artistic insufficiency, but also in the newly carved pieces whose style was perceived as a departure from the humanistic standards of modelling, evidenced in the earlier, flourishing phases of Graeco-Roman art.[7] As Jaś Elsner has shown, Berenson's 'decline of form' bore greater ramifications in the twentieth-century historiography where this phrase stood for the alienation of post-300 art from classical Graeco-Roman traditions.[8] With the establishment of the field now known as Late Antiquity, attitudes towards the Arch of Constantine changed significantly and undermined the narrative of decline. In present scholarship, the sculptural bricolage and style of the Arch are understood as signs of the artistic idiom that would be crucial for the development of medieval art.[9] As a result, with a shifting focus towards changes and the perception of the period as transition, rather than an end of artistic culture, the decline model became questionable.[10]

The deconstruction of the decline paradigm in the scholarship about Late Antiquity may offer a conceptual stimulus for the study of Late Byzantium.[11] The Byzantine Empire sits at the heart of the transformations and overlaps that mark the history of the Mediterranean from the thirteenth century onward. This was a world where people, ideas and objects were in motion, challenging established values and identities.[12] Artistic constructions, regardless of the different approaches in historiographies, should be studied in their appropriate context. From that perspective, reconsidering the concept of decline and the arts of the Palaiologan era calls for closer investigation of the changes brought about by this nascent world order in which Byzantium redefined its standing as well as its distinct artistic and religious culture.[13] The emphasis should shift from decline to transformations that impacted the society, culture, art and architecture of the Late Byzantine world. The artistic aspects, as pointed out in this chapter, would support such views.

In the cyclical theory of history, with its biological metaphors of growth, maturity and decay, decline is a consequence of a prior flourishing.[14] Thus, reconsidering the concept of decline in Late Byzantine art requires two specific bases of comparison: determining a decline in relation to art from which period in history, and in relation to which specific aspects of art? It is generally assumed that Late Byzantine art declined in comparison to Middle Byzantine art, taken as the period

of flowering in literary and artistic production, ending with the Fourth Crusade and the conquest of Constantinople in 1204. But this position requires greater nuancing, given the numerous elements that persisted between Middle and Late Byzantine art. Most particularly, the works of the twelfth century foreshadow the exploration in the areas of content and form that would characterise the Palaiologan artistic idiom despite the half-century of the Latin Empire in Constantinople (1204–61).[15] This shows the relativity of the 'bud, bloom and decay' cycle model unless one specifies what particular artistic qualities constitute a flourishing and its subsequent decline.[16] Taking as a reference point Bernard Berenson's 'decline of form', the decline will be discussed here on the basis of these three criteria: the production, the artists and the creativity.[17] The chapter does not propose an extensive analysis of each criterion but examines selected features and examples from monumental painting, taking this medium as the key exponent of the pictorial arts during the Late Byzantine period.

Production

As Anthony Cutler states, the history of the industries of art in Byzantium depends on the two bodies of testimony (literary sources and archaeological finds) that can be seriously flawed, while information about the production is often overlooked.[18] As a result, we do not know enough about artisanal practices, the conditions and methods of production. Certainly, these elements varied in response to the changing economic and political situation but also in relation to the demand and taste for art. When it comes to the Palaiologan production, architecture and wall decoration deserve a comment. If one were to measure the quantity, i.e. the number of works but also artisans/artists employed for their production, an impressive number of churches have come down to us from the Palaiologan period from the territory of the Byzantine Empire. As Slobodan Ćurčić has noted, 'More monuments survive from the late period than from any other phase of Byzantine history.'[19] Independent of size, scale or architectural plan, the Palaiologan churches received developed programmes of mural decoration, both in mosaic and painting.[20] In the light of their sheer number, it is difficult to affirm that artistic production was decreasing in either its quantity or its pace: the demand for such production was not diminishing.

Monuments of moderate to small size were produced in great numbers, presumably because of their reasonable cost. However, the Palaiologan period had known impressive, large-scale artistic enterprises such as the Church of the Virgin Paregoretissa (1284–96) in Arta or the Church of the Holy Apostles (1310–14) in Thessaloniki (Figure 2.1).[21] Without diminishing the role of the economic component, one could further add that the moderate size of many Palaiologan churches may reflect the particular function of these buildings. The scale of subsidiary spaces, like the funerary chapels (*parakklesia*), seems in line with the more restricted nature of such structures.[22] The dimensions and proportions of the well-known Constantinopolitan *parakklesion*, the one flanking the main church of the Chora monastery (1316–21) and commissioned by Theodore Metochites, point to

Figure 2.1 Thessaloniki, the Church of the Holy Apostles, view of the interior.

Source: Photo: Athanasios Semoglou.

the private function of that space and hint at the more personal nature of Late Byzantine devotion rather than at a lack of means or available artists (Figure 2.2).[23]

Qualifying the nature of Palaiologan constructions demands similar nuancing. On the basis of what has survived, the repair and rebuilding of pre-existing buildings seem to be a dominant feature in Late Byzantine Constantinople. In contrast to the capital, other regions of the Empire, such as Macedonia and its urban centres, particularly Thessaloniki, witnessed intense building activity during the fourteenth century, including new constructions.[24] Furthermore, the restorations or additions to existing complexes do not reflect the patrons' weakening financial prowess. As Robert Ousterhout argues, the reuse of spaces in Late Byzantine Constantinople, for instance, expressed a form of urban continuity.[25] Coupled with the reuse of earlier architectural sculptures, such restorations were bringing buildings back to their ancient glory; they materialised links with the past and chiefly expressed the ambition of their donors and how they conceived the monuments whose restorations they commissioned.[26] Thus, the nature and scale of Palaiologan constructions offer a contrasting picture depending on the region of the Empire, but also on the rank and aspirations of the donors – aspects that require more attentive and contextualised analysis.

Artists

Closely related to the production of Late Byzantine art is the second element we are using as a parameter in our reconsideration of the concept of decline: the artists. Our knowledge about the *savoir faire* of Palaiologan artists – their

Figure 2.2 Istanbul, the Church of the Chora monastery, view of the *parakklesion*.

Source: Photo: Nicholas Melvani.

training and modes of organisation, the access and recourse to new techniques/ materials, and finally the space they had for expression (the phenomenon of erudite artists), even experimentation in the artistic processes – is still very limited.[27] From Giorgio Vasari to Bernard Berenson, a lack of good masters 'who had left Rome' explains the 'decline of form' evidenced on the Arch of Constantine.[28] Not all good artists left Byzantium in the last centuries of the Empire. The impressive number and richness of Palaiologan monumental decorations suggest that competent artists, working sometimes in several media, were not lacking.[29] Some of them gained a solid local reputation, like 'Kalliergis of All Thessaly the Best Painter',[30] while Michael Astrapas and Eutychios acquired an international stature (Figure 2.3).[31] Due to intense circulation of artists, the nexus of professional relationships between them (exchanges), the Palaiologan artistic idiom could spread beyond the territory of the Byzantine Empire, for instance, to neighbouring Bulgaria and Serbia.[32] Even within the Empire, artistic similarities noticed in localities considerably distant from each other, such as Mystra and Constantinople, confirm that painters were travelling extensively; a phenomenon that raises broader issues of regional and larger connectivity in the Late Byzantine world.[33]

Another feature worth singling out is the fact that one is able to recognise specific workshops in the Palaiologan period with greater precision and certainty than in other periods. This may be documented, in the case not only of artists

Figure 2.3 Ohrid, the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos, the representation of Saint Proco-
pius, detail: artist's signature.

Source: Photo: © Svetlana Tomeković.

such as Michael Astrapas and Eutychios, employed by the same donor, but also
of modest, itinerant artists who worked in a single area for local donors, as in the
case of Crete.[34] It is beguiling for art historians who can trace the stylistic evolu-
tion in the work of single artists or group of artists.[35] In the late twelfth century,
craftsmen started to emerge from their anonymity, a phenomenon that continues
and expands in later centuries. Late Byzantine painters were leaving their names
but also identifiable 'hands', i.e. their recognisable style, providing valuable evi-
dence about the processes of art-making that can be reconstructed on the basis of
more accurate knowledge about the development of particular ateliers and crafts-
men.[36] Moreover, the fact that painters were revealing their artistic personality
opens space to investigate the role of artistic identity and creativity (experimenta-
tions, innovations, eclecticism). Artists rejecting anonymity, together with patrons
expressing their 'I' through donor portraits, for instance, represent facets of Late

Byzantine culture that have been receiving increasing attention in recent decades.[37] Documenting and investigating these signs of individuality in the Palaiologan artistic production and patronage are instrumental to discussions of decline, understood traditionally as the decline of ingenuity.[38]

Creativity

In modern conceptions of art, originality is usually equated with the creation of a novel principle in a new form whereas establishing unmistakably new works of art represents the essence of innovation.[39] Although originality has other facets and its understanding varies with the era and society, the concept remains a difficult one in the context of Byzantine culture whose many features, particularly in the late period, were perceived as derivative rather than innovative.[40] Recourse to borrowed or pre-existing forms that a modern viewer may associate with the idea of artless replication represented for Palaiologan painters a departure point and a ground for inventiveness both in content (iconography) and artistic processes (pictural forms and expressions). The openness to other artistic cultures[41] and stylistic diversity[42] are aspects that also demand further investigations in order to extend our understanding of creativity in Late Byzantine painting beyond the label of a derivative, eclectic and conservative art.

The last centuries of Byzantium represent a 'golden age' of monumental cycles, both in mosaic and fresco decoration. Indeed, the Palaiologan artists expressed their creativity and inventiveness in the development of large pictorial ensembles that cover almost all available wall surfaces. Painted church programmes incorporate, besides representations of the Great Feasts, the cycles of the Passion of Christ and Christ's Public Ministry, the Life of the Virgin and hagiographic cycles, to mention the most important ones. Such ensembles are also complemented by numerous individual figures. That is the case with the Metropolis at Mystra (1270–85, and the first half of the fourteenth century) where the decoration includes the lives of the Virgin, Christ, the two pairs of martyrs Nestor and Demetrios, and Cosma and Damian, the cycle of the Last Judgement and representations of Seven Oecumenical Councils.[43] Moreover, the cycles are expanded compared to Middle Byzantine models with the addition of new episodes. The cycles, like the Passion of Christ in the Church of Saint Nikolaos Orphanos at Thessaloniki (after 1320), became long and incorporated images that previously appeared separately or were less extensive (Figure 2.4).[44] Prologue and epilogue episodes often complemented the main scene, as illustrated in the Dormition of the Virgin that becomes like a mini-cycle in the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid (1295) (Figure 2.5).[45] Finally, the Palaiologan monumental ensembles included novel themes, such as the Heavenly Liturgy in dome decoration whose iconography reflects close connections between paintings and various aspects of cult and offices celebrated in the churches.[46] Concurrently, the need to visualise the prayers and liturgical hymns, like the Akathistos Hymn that became a cycle of its own, represents one other significant development of the period.[47]

The multiplication of cycles and scenes is seen in relation to the development of 'visual story-telling' and the intensified narrativity whose particularities as well as

Figure 2.4 Thessaloniki, the Church of Saint Nikolaos Orphanos, the cycle of Passion.

Source: Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 2.5 Ohrid, the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos, the Dormition of the Virgin.

Source: Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

broader artistico-historical and cultural implications in Palaiologan art are starting to receive the scholarly attention they deserve.[48] But this phenomenon brought forth the unprecedented thematic wealth of Palaiologan pictorial programmes whose elaborate content responded closely to the milieu for which they were created and reflects a vibrant creativity rather than decline.[49] That being said, many iconographic formulas and methods of narration owed a not inconsiderable debt to Middle Byzantine and earlier models. However, works of painters like Michael Astrapas and Eutychios, spanning a period of 25 years, reveal artistic autonomy (if not freedom) and creativity in the selection, the elaboration of episodes and the relations between them within cycles and their overall organisation in the physical space.[50] These aspects vary from monument to monument and point to the resources painters had at their disposal, i.e. models (material and conceptual) but also their specific artistic approach and *savoir faire*.[51] Independent of regional variations, replete Palaiologan monumental ensembles reveal inventiveness in the way artists exploited (adopted, adapted, reinterpreted) their resources, infusing them with a genuine touch (composition, expression) that transformed the interiors of even small, provincial churches into visually captivating spaces.

Like the Arch of Constantine, referred to at the beginning of this chapter, the study of Late Byzantine art contains within it the push and pull of the ancient and novel. In both historical eras artists were creative in the way they approached and brought together different models from long-preceding traditions. While reconsidering the trope of decline, one should investigate more carefully how retrospective and innovative elements complement each other and constitute a new departure point. In contrast to the use of spolia attested in Palaiologan building and sculptural practices,[52] representations like the personification of the sea in the mosaic of the Baptism of Christ in the *parakklesion* of St Mary Pammakaristos in Constantinople (around 1300), raise the question of virtual reuse and the eclectic aesthetic.[53] A youthful figure holding a rudder, rendered in grisaille and appearing in a seashell (Figure 2.6), differs considerably from its contemporary counterparts featuring a woman sitting either in a boat or riding a sea monster.[54] Seen from the back, represented naked and in a sensual body twist while emerging from the shell, whose shape corresponds to the flowing rhythm of river waves, this personification reveals a more engaged approach to antique models, such as the representations of river gods or Venus in a seashell.[55] Taken from earlier sources and possibly meant to recall them, this pictorial quotation transforms a standard iconographic element into a visually novel component that, in conjunction with the naked figure of Christ, gives a more dynamic appearance to the whole scene.

In the discussion of the 'revival' of antique traditions in Palaiologan art, this and many other similar representations are perceived as renewed classical motifs reflecting the erudite milieu to which the donors belonged.[56] But the issues of 'revival' and 'decline' should not divert our attention from a deeper, underlying process at work in Late Byzantine paintings: the artistic exploration of the human figure through varied representations of its postures, gestures and expressions in relation to other figures and the setting in the backdrop of scenes. In the majority of Palaiologan pictorial ensembles, especially from the end of the thirteenth century onward, the figures are no longer of monumental scale, as in Mileševa

Figure 2.6 Istanbul, the monastery of the Virgin Pammakaristos, the *parakklesion*, the Baptism of Christ.

Source: Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

(1222–28) or Sopoćani (1263–68). But their profusion, both as single representations and as components of expanded/aggregative, multi-figured images within cycles, and their expressivity reveal the artistic mastery of painters and the communicative possibilities of the Palaiologan murals.

Compared to Middle Byzantine paintings, the Palaiologan artists depicted less static and more expressive figures. The relations between the participants (main and secondary) in scenes are diversified, compositions are animated, sometimes even dramatic and full of tension. The postures (bodies turning left and right, painted in profile or from the back, etc.), gestures and facial expressions represent a wide range of human emotions. Although rooted in the Komnenian art, this tendency intensified considerably from the thirteenth century onward, in both Late Byzantine and Western medieval art.[57] The representation of human passion, as illustrated in the Descent from the Cross in the Vatopedi Monastery (ca. 1312) or the Lamentation of Christ from the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid (Figure 2.7), is externalised in the movements of protagonists but foremost in their facial features (the lips, the eyes, the eyebrows, the foreheads and the contracted faces) and exaggerated expressions.[58] The figures are often injected with a psychological and emotional intensity that finds its visual parallels in the architectural setting of the scenes. The depictions of architecture in Palaiologan cycles

Figure 2.7 Ohrid, the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos, the Lamentation of Christ.

Source: Photo: © Svetlana Tomeković.

Figure 2.8 Mont Athos, Protaton Church, the Nativity of the Virgin.

Source: Photo: Anestis Vasilakeris.

and images are often in dissonance with the naturalistic rendering of the space and depth, praised by Giorgio Vasari as the yardstick of artistic quality.[59] But taking into account that the architectural representations are attuned to the human figure, i.e. its role in the visual narrative, its inner content apparent in gestures and expressions as illustrated in the Nativity of the Virgin in the Protaton church (Figure 2.8), one could suggest that they are essentially 'expressionist'.[60] Approached through

the lens of narrativity,[61] but also the theatricality of images,[62] the study of their 'emotional realism' and visual rhetoric,[63] these features of Palaiologan pictorial ensembles foreground the quest for the expressivity of the human figure and its fuller visual characterisation. They also attest the inventiveness of the painters in whose artistic language novelty and references to the models from the past often mutually reinforced each other. A broader question still remains unanswered – how these pictorial strategies impacted the beholder's perception, the experience (visual and spiritual) and agency of paintings.

Conclusion

This chapter has aimed for a nuanced approach to the study of Late Byzantine art by asking whether that artistic production was an art in decline or an art in (reflecting) the age of decline. An examination of selected features of Palaiologan monumental paintings on the basis of three criteria – the production, the artists and the creativity – refutes the concept of decline but foregrounds several artistic phenomena which demand greater consideration and confirm the necessity of the quest for alternative models in the study of Late Byzantine art.

An impressive number of monuments from that time period show that the artistic production was not diminishing. Independent of their size and the region, elaborate decorative programmes of Palaiologan churches attest that monumental decoration represents the key exponent of pictorial arts. Though mural painting constituted an affordable way of decorating large spaces,[64] the critical role played by this medium should not be seen as a sign of impoverishment, i.e. decline. On the contrary, mural painting opened aesthetic possibilities that allowed the exploration of pictorial expression and enhanced the diffusion of the Palaiologan iconography and artistic idiom throughout the sphere of Byzantine cultural influence. It also facilitated the circulation of artists, their communication and exchange, which all strengthened the connectivity of the Byzantine world, despite its changing economic and political situation.

The retrospective tendencies and the practice of Palaiologan painters to draw inspiration from earlier models should not be seen as an indication of artistic deficiency and conservatism. Rather, they reveal how the Byzantines capitalised on their long and rich artistic traditions not only in the face of the political and economic decline of their Empire but in the world of constant mutations. Moving beyond the decline but also revival paradigm while taking into account the signs of individuality in the Palaiologan artistic production and patronage, one needs to investigate further how Byzantines redefined their distinct artistic culture in the last centuries of the Empire, and the role played by a heightened consciousness among artists and patrons of where they and their art stood in relation to the past[65] but also to other artistic traditions and cultures.[66]

The unprecedented thematic wealth of Palaiologan pictorial programmes and the inventiveness in the way artists exploited their resources through the creative reuse of various models are all apparent in narrative and often extended monumental cycles. Such cycles and their expressive, multi-figured scenes

transformed church interiors into visually captivating and overwhelming spaces. These particular features of Palaiologan interiors indicate that monumental decoration (its content and style) demands fresh contextualised analysis in relation to its deployment in the physical space of the church, the liturgical practices and the impact it had on the beholder.[67] It is worth mentioning that in these specific aspects the Palaiologan artistic idiom outlived the political end of the Byzantine Empire in 1453 and acquired a long life within the art developed by Orthodox populations under the Ottoman Empire. In that sense, the Palaiologan monumental painting may be seen as a late but certainly not as the last expression of Byzantine art, nor as an end of its artistic culture.

Acknowledgements

Notes

 1 For Palaiologan art presented as 'art in the service of failing society', see Cormack (2000: 187). On this subject, see Ćurčić and Mouriki (1991); Evans (2004); Brooks and Oresko (2006); and Joubert and Caillet (2012). Palaiologan art has also been viewed as the last Byzantine 'renaissance', another loaded paradigm, the discussion of which is beyond the scope of this chapter. According to various scholars, Palaiologan paintings show classicising tendencies (characterised also as progressive, courtly, Constantinopolitan or plastic style) as well as anti-classicising currents (seen as regressive, monastic, popular, graphic, to name a few). See, for instance, Underwood (1975); Chatzidakis (1977); Belting, Mango and Mouriki (1978); and Rosenqvist (2004).
 2 The 51st Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, 'The Post-1204 Byzantine World: New Approaches and Novel Directions' (University of Edinburgh, 13–15 April 2018) testifies that the exploration of the Palaiologan period has grown into a vibrant and leading field of Byzantine studies.
 3 This author analysed new patterns of artistic practice, patronage and munificence that emerged in the face of decline by studying art objects created specifically for diplomatic exchange and their role in late Byzantine diplomatic strategies. She concludes that 'despite or because of diminishing political advantage, Byzantines relied on an increasingly desirable cultural and artistic heritage' (Hilsdale 2014: 22). See also Cutler (1994).
 4 The concept of the so-called Post-Byzantine art has recently been reconsidered and questioned in the conference '" Post-Byzantine" Art: Orthodox Christian Art in a " Non-Byzantine" World' (Central European University, Budapest, 15–16 May 2013). On the Byzantine artistic legacy after 1453, see, for instance, Ćurčić (1988).
 5 Michelis (1955: 249–53); Fernie (1995: 10–11, 27–8). The concept of decline also served as the model for the study of the Late Ottoman Empire. See Kafadar (1997–98).
 6 Berenson (1954); Elsner (2003).
 7 Berenson (1954: 13–14, 48–60).
 8 Elsner (2002); Trilling (1987).
 9 Elsner (2000).
10 Brown (1988; 2011).
11 Despite the obvious differences between them, the fact that arts of both historical eras were viewed through a lens of decline represents an interesting parallelism.

Discrepancies between the political turbulences, economic weakening, on the one hand, and the cultural strength, rich and diverse artistic productions, on the other, underpin the developments of both Late Antique and Late Byzantine worlds. Such contrasts and juxtapositions reflect the complexities of millennia-long cultures. One may see them as symptoms of a '*fin d'époque*' and decay but they can also be approached in a neutral way. In the descriptive model, used by Heinrich Wölfflin, for instance, Late Antique and Late Byzantine arts would be characterised as Baroque in contrast to Classical (Michelis 1955: 221–9; Fernie 1995: 15–16, 116, 134, 333). They can also be perceived as expressions of the late style that Edward Said defined as specific artistic idioms that emerge in the works of art 'in the thought of the end (death)' (Said 2006).

12   See the collection of essays in Ödekan, Akyürek and Necipoğlu (2010). For an analysis of the thirteenth-century Aegean as the world of liquid frontiers, where individuals were forced to negotiate multiple identities, while clinging to long-established certainties, that proved to be challenging, see Saint-Guillain and Stathakopoulos (2012). For the impact of the objects in motion, see Mathews (2018).

13   This chapter focuses on monumental arts but it is important to signal the place that icons hold in Late Byzantine artistic and religious culture, see Carr (2004).

14   Fernie (1995: 23).

15   Djurić (1981); Cutler and Spieser (1996); Evans and Wixom (1997). The fact that several aspects of the twelfth-century paintings will reach their full development in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries makes scholars also use the term Later Byzantine art that encompasses them all.

16   Regarding the 'bud, bloom and decay' cycle model, see Fernie (1995: 23). Western art-historical conceptions of flourishing have been rather narrow: the maturity of an artistic style/phase has often been equated with classical values and originality. Such viewings reinforced the decline model in the study of Late Antiquity but also of Byzantium, both cultures being seen as post-classical, therefore declining (Fernie 1995: 11; Elsner 2000).

17   Berenson (1954: 1–9, 37, 61–3).

18   Cutler (2002: 555–6).

19   Ćurčić (2004: 65). A comprehensive study of Byzantine monumental painting has yet to be produced and a synthesis comparable to the one Slobodan Ćurčić has produced on the architecture is lacking. Forthcoming Drpić, I., *Monumental Painting in Byzantium and Beyond: New perspectives*, will certainly represent a valuable critical assessment of monumental pictorial arts.

20   It is also important to note that, besides Constantinople, numerous churches on the Greek mainland received mosaic decoration, between ca. 1290 and ca. 1320. A mosaic workshop was active in Thessaloniki (Antonaras 2016: 128; and Bakirtzis *et al.* 2012: 297–300). In many cases, the mosaics cover only certain parts of the church, as attested by the dome in the Church of the Virgin Paregoretissa in Arta. Mosaic remains the most costly medium but, as Anthony Cutler has shown, gold-clad tesserae were evidenced in Arta and in the Chora church. Without relating this medium to the Late Byzantine economy, the author concludes that 'the demand for mosaic would remain entangled in such imponderables as taste, frugality and the pretensions of the monument in the eyes of the person who paid for its adornment' (Cutler 2002: 561).

21   Ćurčić (2010: 552–4, 567–8).

22   Grabar (1975: 6–7); Ćurčić (2004); Marinis (2014: 77–99).

23   Regarding Theodore Metochites' funerary chapel, see Ousterhout (1987: 32–6, 91–141) and Gerstel (2011). For the more personal nature of Late Byzantine devotion and artistic practice, see Effenberger (2004). Anthony Cutler has asserted that both artistic and architectural evidence signal the triumph of personal over common devotion in the Palaiologan period. He describes this phenomenon as a 'possessive attitude towards a religious monument' (Cutler 1981: 768–9). For the most recent and thorough work on the personal aspect of Late Byzantine art, see Drpić (2016).

24 Ćurčić (2004: 66–8). For the building activity in Thessaloniki during the Palaiologan period, see Vokotopoulos (1987) and Ćurčić (2003). For the commercial activities and artisanal production in the city, see Loverdou-Tsigarida (2003) and Antonaras (2016). For the city's monasteries, see Varinlioğlu (2005).

25 Ousterhout (2000: 245).

26 Melvani (2018).

27 Rare initiatives in that direction are represented by these two volumes: Vassilaki (1997) and Bacci (2003). Regarding Byzantine artists in general, see Cutler, 'Artists', *ODB* 1: 196–201. For the painting methods of Byzantine artists, see Winfield (1968).

28 Berenson concludes that 'real sculptors ran away from Rome for relative safety leaving behind them the humble native artisans' (Berenson 1954: 31; Elsner 2003).

29 For artists working in several media, see Cutler (2002: 56–9, 581–3); Cutler, 'Artists', *ODB* 1: 197.

30 Pelekanidis (1973: 7–12).

31 The Late Byzantine period witnessed the rise of artists' names appearing in sources, dedicatory inscriptions and signatures (Kalopissi-Verti 1994, 2003). The most famous case is the workshop of Michael Astrapas and Eutychios. On this subject, see Miljković-Pepek (1967); Kisas (1974); Todić (1998, 2001) and Marković (2004, 2010).

32 Babić (1991); Jevtić (forthcoming).

33 Mouriki (1978: 75–6); Cutler (2002: 562–3).

34 Mouriki (1978: 77). See also Vassilaki (2009). Regarding the workshop of Cretan painters going from one church to another, see Tsamakda (2012).

35 That is the case, for instance, with Michael Astrapas and Eutychios whose artistic evolution can be followed closely (Todić 1998: 228–62).

36 Ibid.: 263–95.

37 Kalopissi-Verti (1993–94). For patronage, its socio-economic and political conditions, see Kalopissi-Verti (1992, 1996, 2006); Spieser and Yota (2012). For the realm of personal piety and its artistic and literary manifestations in Later Byzantine art, see Drpić (2016: 1–17, 67–98). For the artistic patronage of Bulgarian tsars, see Chapter 11 by Lilyana Yordanova in this volume.

38 Fernie (1995: 10–12); Shiff (1996: 106–9, 115).

39 Shiff (1996: 108).

40 Originality is a loaded term, discussion of which is beyond the scope of this chapter. See Littlewood (1995); Cutler (1981: 787). For different positions on the topic of artistic originality, see Shiff (1996: 103–15).

41 For artistic interactions between Byzantium and the West, particularly Italy, in the Palaiologan era, see, for instance, Lymberopoulou (2018). Regarding the relationship with the Islamic arts, see Ousterhout (2004); Cağaptay (2011); and Peacock and Yildiz (2015).

42 Regarding the stylistic plurality and diversity of Late Byzantine art, see Mouriki (1978) and Gabelić (1991).

43 Dufrenne (1970); Chatzidakis (1985: 35–43); Torp (2004: 73). For the architecture of the building and its chronology, see Marinou (2002).

44 Tsitouridou (1986); Zarras (2006–07, 2010); Bakirtzis (2003).

45 Miljković-Pepek (1967: 114, Figure 40); Korunovski and Dimitrova (2006: 154–60, Figure 118).

46 One example comes from the Church of the Panagia Olympiotissa at Elasson (1295–1304) (Constantinides 1992: 92–8, Plates 10–13). Among studies about the paintings and the liturgy, see Ševčenko (2006) and Carr (2004).

47 The Akathistos Hymn was represented in the Church of the Panagia Olympiotissa at Elasson (Constantinides 1992: 134–77, Plates 80–7). On this topic, see Spatharakis (2005).

48 For the place of such cycles and images in the space of churches and their impact on the beholder, see Jevtić (2013); Zarras (2016b).

49 See also Chapter 4 by Alessia Maria Rossi in this volume.

50 Todić (1987, 1998); Zarras (2010, 2016a).
51 For material and conceptual models of Byzantine artists, see Cutler (2003).
52 Ousterhout (2000: 247–50; 2006); Geymonat (2012); Melvani (2018).
53 Popović (1975); Belting, Mango and Mouriki (1978: 64–6, Figure 47).
54 See, for instance, the Baptism in the Church of Saints Apostles in Thessaloniki (Stephan 1986: 59–62, Figure 5).
55 Lassus (1965: 177, 179, Figures 3–4); Darmon (2005: 1290, Figure 10). The personification of the sea is similar to the representation of the sea on the sixth-century gold medallion from the Dumbarton Oaks collection that is, in turn, inspired by antique images of Venus (Ross 1965: 2: 33, Plate xxviii); Popović (1975: 240, Figure 2).
56 For more on this topic, see Jevtić (2008).
57 See, among others, Michelis (1955: 197); Grabar (1975: 16); Maguire (1977); Belting (1980–81); Cutler (2004). For the Western medieval context, see Belting (1994); Derbes (1996).
58 For the Vatopedi Monastery and its Palaiologan paintings, see Hagion Oros (1996: 220–84). For the church of the Virgin Peribleptos, see Korunovski and Dimitrova (2006: 154–60, Figure 117).
59 Fernie (1995: 11).
60 Carr (2004: 144).
61 Zarras (2016b).
62 Vasilakeris (2014).
63 Maguire (1981, 2011).
64 Cutler (2002: 562).
65 Nelson (1999). For Theodore Metochites's relation to the past, see Magdalino (2011).
66 The contributions of influences from Italy but also Muslim Anatolia and the Latin East are more apparent in regional productions and they reflect the stylistic diversity characteristic of the Palaiologan period. See note 41.
67 For example, the research of Sharon E.J. Gerstel on 'painting chanted prayers' (Gerstel 2015).

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3 The timeliness of timelessness

Reconsidering decline in the Palaiologan period

Cecily J. Hilsdale

Twilight and teleology

Most publications devoted to Later Byzantium, especially art-historical studies, draw on environmental and organic metaphors to encapsulate the mood of immanent ending, and in so doing they suggest that history, and art history, follow the laws of nature in its cyclical teleology. Title phrases such as 'twilight', for example, evoke the coming darkness of night; and the 'final flowering' of culture alludes to the inevitable wilting and decay that prompt a return to primordial earth.[1] Against this tradition, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York avoided such imagery in the title of its 2003 exhibition dedicated to the later period, *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)*.[2] Moreover, in its insistence on an end date of 1557, when the term 'Byzantine' was adopted to differentiate the eastern medieval Roman Empire from its ancient predecessor, the title skirted any obvious emphasis on the political end of the Empire associated with the fall of Constantinople in 1453.[3] Still, the categories 'faith' and 'power' remain open for negotiation and interpretation today just as they did in Later Byzantium. The contingency of the title contrasts with the previous exhibition at the same institution focusing on the Middle Byzantine period, *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843–1261*, where 'glory' signals an ideal and elevated category as well as an aesthetic one.[4] Faith and power are far more ambiguous, both conceptually and experientially. In the final centuries of Byzantium, constricted political power prompted a negotiation of Orthodoxy itself, the primary formalisation of Byzantine faith.[5]

Despite the contentiousness of faith and power, the strength of Later Byzantine cultural production remains undisputed. The status of the arts of Later Byzantium stands in sharp contrast to our explanations of the socio-political realities, which are generally characterised in terms of decline; and this contrast is treated as a paradox in most scholarship. In the Introduction to the 1991 volume, *The Twilight of Byzantium*, Doula Mouriki and Slobodan Ćurčić assert plainly that 'the political and economic decline of the Empire was not neatly paralleled by a similar cultural decline'.[6] More recently, Nevra Necipoğlu describes the dissonance between the era's culture and politics as a 'cliché' in the opening lines of her article:

> A cliché found in almost every modern work on the Byzantine Empire is that the Palaiologan period (1261–1453) was a time of decline in all domains

except arts and culture, which, paradoxically, flourished and revived during the very same period.[7]

Necipoğlu's aim is not to counter the idea of decline itself, which marks the Palaiologan political and economic fields so strongly, but to trace elements of vitality 'outside the cultural, intellectual, and artistic spheres'.[8] To that end, she argues that emperors of the final centuries of the Empire creatively adapted to the changed circumstances of their time, working hard to maintain the force of imperium even if the impression of majestic sovereignty did not match the reality on the ground, so to speak. She explains, for example, that Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos

> [was] acutely aware of the waning power of the Byzantine Empire in his own day, yet … was obliged to preserve the illusion of imperial authority as the head of a polity where the force of imperial tradition always remained strong.[9]

At stake in her argument is the idea of personal and collective agency: emperors and their administrators did not sit idly by, waiting for the inevitable end of the Empire, but took unprecedented measures in an attempt to improve the circumstances of their Empire.

In line with this argument, my study of Palaiologan art and diplomacy has sought to offer an explanation for the disjunction between artistic strength and socio-economic weakness by emphasising the compensatory dimension of the cultural sphere, of the diplomatic gift and the recalibration of imperial imagery in particular.[10] Gift-giving, it is argued, constituted the most effective strategy for establishing heightened possibilities for action within the context of diminished political and economic influence. Like Necipoğlu, I understood political and economic decline to be a fact in the Later Byzantine period, with variation in character and degree, and I sought innovation in those strained realities, insisting on the potential of decline to be generative. Imperial imagery, one of the most conservative genres of Byzantine art, responded to the socio-economic realities of the Palaiologan period with an innovative dialectic between seemingly timeless immutability and finely calibrated historicity.

The potential of political decline to generate artistic innovation should come as no surprise – to think otherwise is to presume a symmetrical relationship between culture and politics – and yet the strength of the arts in the Palaiologan period is still seen mostly as a paradox in light of the era's constrained social realities. This entrenched position finds explanation in a historiography of the period dominated by the tendency to treat everything as but a prelude to 1453.[11] Decline itself then may not be the key issue here, I would contend, but rather the sense of inevitability thought to link decline to fall – that is, the understanding of decline not as a phase that can be overcome but as a fixed degeneration that cannot be reversed. In what follows, I consider the primary voice that has shaped this historiography and then offer a glimpse into how Byzantines of the later period themselves

understood their own historical moment and their strategies for exercising agency within those diminished circumstances.

Decline to fall?

Edward Gibbon sits at the centre of any discussion of decline.[12] His history of the period has profoundly impacted the historiography of Byzantium, in large part because he so forcefully links decline to fall. In so doing, his history conveys the impression of diplomatic strategies as futile and culture as ineffectual, positions that should be called into question. Gibbon's narrative is essentially one of teleological degeneration. This becomes evident even from a brief survey of the detailed Table of Contents for his monumental study, which was published in three instalments from 1776 to 1788.[13] Chapter 62 covers the early Palaiologan period, primarily from the interregnum to the early fourteenth century (Figure 3.1). Following the Laskarids, it charts the reign of Michael VIII Palaiologos as an era marked by false union with the Pope, hostile Angevin designs, the Sicilian revolt, and war on all sides. Medieval duplicity, hostility and war culminate in a digression on the 'present state of Athens'. Today, according to Gibbon:

> It would not be easy in the country of Plato and Demosthenes, to find or read a copy of their works … The Athenians walk with supine indifference among the glorious ruins of antiquity; and such is the debasement of their character, that they are incapable of admiring the genius of their predecessors.[14]

In this radically diachronic move, Gibbon traces a direct line of descent, and degeneration, from antiquity to the later thirteenth century to the later eighteenth century. Then, Chapter 63 promptly returns to the Palaiologan period, further elaborating 'civil wars, and ruin of the Greek Empire'.

As an interlude to the chaotic affairs of the ruinous Greek state, Chapters 64 and 65 shift focus to describe the rise of power among Byzantium's neighbours, primarily, but not exclusively, the Ottomans. The narrative threads converge at the end of Chapter 64 with the 'Distress of Constantinople' (1395–1402) and again in Chapter 65 with the first siege of Constantinople (1422), both of which foreshadow the final Ottoman conquest of the capital (1453), which is narrated a few chapters later. In between these two sieges, in Chapter 66, we are presented with what constitutes essentially a litany of failed diplomatic activity: Byzantine emperors appeal to popes, they visit Western Europe in person, and even convert to Catholicism. The account in Chapter 66 motivates much of my thinking on decline and Later Byzantine diplomatic strategies. For Gibbon, each of these appeals to terrestrial and spiritual authorities of the West is doomed to fail, given how heavily weighted his account is by the heft of the eventual fall. All of these diplomatic gestures thus appear empty, laden with the pathos of futility.

For Gibbon, the only good to come from this story is the 'revival of Greek learning in Italy'. Temporal and spiritual salvation proved 'unavailing', but all was not lost, according to Gibbon, who then dedicates a third of the whole chapter

CONTENTS.

CHAP. LXII.

The Greek Emperors of Nice and Constantinople....Elevation and Reign of Michael Palæologus....His false Union with the Pope and the Latin Church....Hostile Designs of Charles of Anjou....Revolt of Sicily....War of the Catalans in Asia and Greece....Revolutions and present State of Athens.

CHAP. LXIII.

Civil Wars, and Ruin of the Greek Empire....Reigns of Andronicus the Elder and Younger, and John Palæologus....Regency, Revolt, Reign, and Abdication of John Cantacuzene....Establishment of a Genoese Colony at Pera or Galata....Their Wars with the Empire and City of Constantinople

Figure 3.1 Table of Contents from E. Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.*

Source: Gibbon (1805), vol. VII, p. viii.

to Greek learning and learned Greeks of the Palaiologan period.[15] After all, he writes:

> In their lowest servitude and depression, the subjects of the Byzantine throne were still in possession of a golden key that could unlock the treasures of antiquity; of a musical and prolific language, that gives soul to the objects of sense and a body to the abstraction of philosophy.[16]

The arc of Gibbon's argument is well known and has shaped the historiography profoundly: the Byzantines preserved the wisdom of the ancients to be reborn in Renaissance Europe, so the story goes. By this account, the Byzantines were passive conservators, whereas the European intellectuals actively brought the ancients back to life.[17] Gibbon's model influenced twentieth-century histories such as George Ostrogorsky's 'classic' *History of the Byzantine State*.[18] The implications of this narrative are clear: Byzantium was a doomed state for Gibbon and even its greatest contribution to world history (Classical Literature) had to be accidental in some sense, or, at the very least, passive. This holds true for the historiography of the Empire's art as well: in the visual sphere, Byzantium was seen to preserve but not to innovate. Early twentieth-century art historian Adolf Goldschmidt provides a metaphor that encapsulates this line of thought vividly: he equated ancient Greek culture with dehydrated foodstuff kept cool in Byzantium, and it was made digestible by the moisture and heat of early modern Europe.[19]

Gibbon is not my straw man, and my aim is not to defend Later Byzantium from charges of decline. On the contrary, as Ihor Ševčenko elaborated long ago, Byzantine intellectuals of the day were acutely aware of the sad state of affairs: 'looking at their country and at themselves [they] now spoke of the "remains," "small remnants," "dregs," "refuse," of the great Roman Empire, of the Romans or of the Hellenes'.[20] From Alexios Makrembolites to Nikephoros Gregoras, from Demetrius Kydones to the Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos, according to Ševčenko, there was a 'weary feeling that the hour was late'.[21]

But lateness is relational. 'The hour was late … But with respect to what?' Ševčenko asks.[22] Decline must be seen in relative terms, always marked against an earlier and greater benchmark. Nostalgia for a more glorious past implies dissatisfaction with a more diminished present. But in no way does such an awareness of an impoverished now suggest a belief in the inevitability of the Empire's demise.[23] To this end, it is imperative to disaggregate the concept of the Empire's decline from its eventual fall, which is not only implied in Gibbon, but crafted emphatically as an inevitability (again, the briefest of surveys of his Table of Contents makes this point absolutely clear).

The seemingly irreversible passage from decline to fall is all too often taken as a given by modern scholars, even if unintentionally. With hindsight, modern scholars who know that the end of the Empire was near cannot help but negatively evaluate Later Byzantine diplomatic strategies, which included important innovations in the cultural sphere. Again, the elaborate diplomatic actions narrated by Gibbon in Chapter 66 of his history can only appear as empty and futile gestures

against the looming backdrop of rising Ottoman power – the arc of his narrative precludes any other impression. But in order to assess the Later Byzantine period on its own terms, it is necessary to suspend, momentarily at least, the negative judgement afforded by historical distance and hindsight. Decline was strongly felt during this period, but the imperial administration took unprecedented diplomatic measures in an attempt to change the direction of that decline; many of these measures were primarily in the cultural arena (an arena that political scientists might call 'soft power'). To focus on the fact that such strategies were unsuccessful in staving off the end of the Empire is to miss the point;[24] in other words, a fixation on ends rather than means mutes the potential for diplomatic agency, and, further, it silences those works of art disseminated in the diplomatic field.

Visualising historicity in Byzantium

What is at stake in this discussion is not decline itself but the teleology with which it is associated – again, the assumption that decline leads inexorably to fall. On this point the Byzantine and modern worldviews diverge strongly. The Byzantines had lost their capital in 1204, but had regained it in 1261; a final termination of their earthly empire, which was understood to mirror the celestial one, was unimaginable, according to traditional Byzantine political philosophy that was steeped in apocryphal apocalyptic thought. The Byzantines understood their Empire to be preordained as the last in all of universal history.[25] Stratis Papaiouannou offers a concrete example of this Byzantine take on universal history: passages added to an early twelfth-century manuscript in Florence specify 'the divinely ordered sequence of kingdoms' as Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Macedonia and Rome (a.k.a. Byzantium), 'the one to be dissolved by the Antichrist', that is, at the end of Time.[26] For Byzantines, the end of Byzantium meant the end of the world; decline was an altogether other matter.

The equation of the end of Empire with the end of time truly was the prevailing Byzantine worldview, finding expression in a wide array of sources from Andrew the Fool to Manasses and more. There was, of course, considerably more diversity and texture to the Byzantine understanding of history and teleology, and in the later period, the traditional understanding of historical process itself saw a profound redefinition.[27] Notable figures such as Theodore II Laskaris in the thirteenth century and Theodore Metochites in the fourteenth century came to see the Byzantine Empire as but one in a series of world empires that followed the laws of nature. Paraphrasing the view of Metochites, Ševčenko writes: 'Like organisms, peoples and empires were born, developed, decayed, and died at the appointed time.'[28] This conception of Byzantium as one of many empires passing through its cycle of life differed from the more popular apocalyptically oriented versions of history, rooted in Pseudo-Methodius, where the precise succession of empires was divinely ordered and revealed through history and prophecy.

These ideas about universal history, and the place of Byzantium within it, inflected visual culture of the period too, as the Modena copy of John Zonaras' *Epitome of Histories* illuminates. The bulk of the manuscript now in Modena's

Biblioteca Estense (Mutinensis Gr. 122) is a mid-fifteenth-century copy of Zonaras' twelfth-century history running from the creation of the world to the advent of Emperor John II Komnenos (r. 1118–43).[29] Soon after 1453, the codex was 'restored' and 'updated': a short catalogue of emperors from Alexios I Komnenos (r. 1081–1118) through Constantine XI Palaiologos (r. 1449–53) was added, in addition to a series of other lists of empresses, patriarchs, offices for court, metropolitans, imperial tombs, and then a more brief enumeration of the imperial line from Constantine I to Constantine XI, as well as a description of the lost equestrian statue of Justinian I in the Augustaion. In its abbreviated though detailed elaboration of Byzantine authority (imperial, dynastic and ecclesiastical), this compendium of historical facts would have held special resonance for readers in the wake of the Ottoman conquests of Constantinople.[30] It is also supplemented by a series of pen and ink drawings of emperors from Julius Caesar to Constantine XI, and, in truth, the manuscript is best known for these images, which are scattered throughout the margins and in three full-page illustrations at the end of the book. Despite slight differentiation in detail – a longer beard or more rounded crown – the overall effect of these imperial effigies is one of similitude and repetition. Leaving aside issues of verisimilitude and the possible relationship to lost sources (minor or monumental), topics that have dominated the conversation about these images, I want to reiterate the argument made by Angela Volan about the significance of the sequencing of the imperial effigies – in particular, the end of the sequence.

The final series of Byzantine emperors appears on folio 294v (Figure 3.2).[31] On this concluding page, we might expect to find the effigy of Constantine XI in the terminal position in the lower right corner, given his status as the last emperor of Byzantium. On the contrary, he appears in the penultimate position. The sequence of emperors terminates instead with Constantine I, inscribed 'Saint Constantine'.[32] Constantine the Great, saint and first emperor, constitutes the final punctuation mark of the series and endows the entire enterprise with a prophetic gloss. The conclusion of the imperial sequence with the faces of the first and last emperors of Byzantium pictured side by side conveys an apocalyptic and prophetic message, akin to the alpha and omega. Such a pairing corresponds to the prophecy of Gennadios, whose popularity increased after 1453, whose history asserts that 'the kingdom of the Christians, which is the kingdom of the Romans, had at its beginning a king Constantine … and at its end, the king was also a Constantine'.[33] For Gennadios, the coincidence of the first and last Constantines meant that the end of the world was near and that the fall of Constantinople was predestined. For the artist who added the imperial effigies to the Modena manuscript too, the beginning and ending of the imperial line were indelibly linked; and the pictorial sequence suggests the possibility of speculative prophecy.

The Later Byzantine and post-Byzantine period saw an elaboration of the apocalyptic repertoire, as Angela Volan's doctoral research has demonstrated brilliantly. Byzantine thought had always been thoroughly imbued with apocalypticism, which offered a framework for a more general sense of historicity; seventh-century Pseudo-Methodios grew out of the genre of historical chronicling and in turn lent a divinely ordained structure for the sequence of temporal progression – a divine

Figure 3.2 *History* of John Zonoras, Modena, Bibl. Estense, ms. gr. 122 fol. 294v.

Source: Photo: courtesy of the Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo.

teleological course of history. But, as is well known, this prophetic and apocalyptic thinking was 'an overwhelmingly text-based endeavour' in the earlier periods, without impacting visual culture in the way that it did in the West.[34] And yet, the prophetic texts attributed to Methodius, Leo the Wise and the prophet Daniel did inflect Later Byzantine and post-Byzantine visual culture. Only after 1453 were

apocalyptic prophecies given visual form explicitly and directly – the earliest series of illustrated Leo the Wise oracles appear in the second half of the fifteenth century.[35] But even before the fall of the capital, Volan argues, imagery of the Last Judgement took on apocalyptic overtones as, for instance, when it was juxtaposed with Adam and Eve cycles so as to evoke in visual terms the 'narrative structure of universal history from apocalyptic literature'.[36] This kind of visual eschatology finds expression in church frescoes of Crete from the first half of the fifteenth century where attenuated genesis cycles lead spatially to a scene of the Last Judgement with an apocalyptic and prophetic resonance, conveying universal history in monumental pictorial form.[37]

In Ihor Ševčenko's words, 'It was difficult to divorce the end of a Universal Empire from the end of the Universe itself.'[38] As a visual analogue to the texts studied by Ševčenko and others, these visual works convey a specific Later Byzantine sense of historicity, a nuanced understanding of historical time and sequence that was deeply conditioned by apocalypticism, a position that stands in contrast to the modern historiography of the period. It is my contention that the concepts of decline and fall, so tightly intertwined by Edward Gibbon, should be disaggregated from one another and assessed in the terms specific to the historical moment. Again, Byzantines of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries may have understood their historical moment as one of decline, but not one that led inexorably to fall. Works of art of the Palaiologan period exhibit an acute awareness of and insistence on sequence, where the present moment is figured as contingent upon the past while also resolutely future-oriented. No work exemplifies this better than the imperial image prefacing the celebrated copy of the works attributed to Dionysios the Areopagite sent to Paris in the opening decade of the fifteenth century (Paris, Louvre MR 416) (Figure 3.3).[39]

The context for the Louvre manuscript is well known. The book was hand-delivered to Saint-Denis outside Paris in 1408 by Manuel Chrysoloras in the immediate aftermath of the emperor's personal diplomatic mission to Europe.[40] When the emperor returned to Constantinople, empty-handed after his four-year fund-raising mission, a fourteenth-century copy of the works attributed to Dionysios the Areopagite was selected as a gift and augmented with miniatures of both the author and the imperial family. Through subtleties of dress, attribute, inscriptions and overall composition, the design of the imperial family portrait on folio 2r transforms well-established Byzantine conventions for imperial imagery into a charged reminder of Byzantine supremacy (Figure 3.3). In light of the assimilated hagiography of Denis-Dionysios, this gift strategically serves as a reminder of the intertwined (though fictive) hagiographies of France and Byzantium and also stresses the Empire headed by Manuel and his sons, the future of Byzantium. This is not the first imperial image to feature the emperor's family – one need only think of the Middle Byzantine imperial family portrait prefacing the Barberini Psalter – but the Palaiologan miniature visualises the configuration and succession of imperial authority in a novel manner.[41] The image maintains the strict decorum and timelessness of traditional imperial portraiture, exhibiting a hieratic and iconic aesthetic that seems impervious to temporal exigencies, but it further develops a complicated message about the

Figure 3.3 Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos and Empress Helena crowned by the Virgin and Child with sons John, Theodore, and Andronikos, fol. 2r, works of Pseudo-Dionysios the Areopagite, made in Constantinople, 1403–5, Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Objets d'Art, MR 416.

Source: Photo: Daniel Arnaudet, Musée du Louvre, Paris © RMN–Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY.

procession of imperial power.[42] In other words, the image is at once traditional and was attuned to a deep sense of historicity.

The image was designed for a particular diplomatic purpose and for an audience in France. To French eyes, accustomed to seeing royal figures depicted in diverse settings with narrative complexity and a degree of informality,[43] the austere and hieratic Byzantine image of imperium must have seemed strange and anachronistic. In discussing the reception of the Byzantine aesthetic in Europe in the fifteenth century, Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood characterise the appeal of the Eastern idiom as an 'authoritative design, a sovereign and styleless appearance, an overall effect of temporal immunity'.[44] Although this refers to the allure of Byzantine icons, those same qualities are evident in the miniatures of the Louvre codex. The relationship between timelessness and timeliness, however, is complicated by the fact that the emperor had been a personal supplicant in France in recent memory, and his gift, bearing his image, was personal and strategic. The appearance of temporal immunity was, in fact, the very point of the image. Beyond the style and form of the composition, which emphasise the divine sanction of the imperial line, the emperor's inscription conveys this idea clearly. Although Manuel II is identified as 'basileus and autokrator of the Romans', standard imperial epithets of the time, his inscription concludes with the unusual Early Byzantine epithet of 'eternal or ever Augustus' (ΑΕΙ ΑΥΓ[ΟΥ]ΣΤΟΣ).[45] The page's cultivation of a sense of eternity was an especially important message in relation to the gift as a whole and the diplomatic agenda that it indexes. What this work suggests is an awareness of the authority of the past and a fidelity to that aesthetic, which was finely calibrated for the present and the future. Ultimately, there is a timeliness to this carefully curated image of timelessness.

Conclusion: decline or crisis

A distinct impression of consistency marks imperial portraiture throughout Byzantium's long history. Solemn, seemingly symmetrical and hierarchical in tone, imperial imagery typically conveys what Henry Maguire has called an abstract 'diagram of supernatural qualities'.[46] This diagrammatic precedence can be understood as a visual analogue for the ideological conception of *taxis* or 'order', a concept with a wide semantic repertoire, ranging from rank to class to way of life. Visual precedence informed by *taxis* emerges as the primary formal register for official Byzantine imperial imagery, thus accounting for the striking consistency among imperial images, even those separated by hundreds of years and created for vastly different purposes. The works discussed here – the sequence of nearly identical imperial effigies in the Marciana manuscript and the Louvre portrait illustrating the procession of imperial power – are no exception. However, rather than reading their sustained engagement with the order and eternal dimensions of the imperial office as out of touch with the changed historical realities of the Later Byzantine era, we should understand such an entrenchment of *taxis* as an anchor for a culture that is adrift and in danger of losing its course.[47] Moreover,

their commitment to continuity and stasis as divinely ordained and prophesied is matched by an equal engagement with history and historical thinking. In them, we see a rethinking of temporal power and progress.

How we characterise the asymmetry between the richness of the Later Byzantine visual tradition and the impoverished realities of imperial dominion is a matter of debate and also of methodology. In the final lines of his article on decline, Ihor Ševčenko praises the intellectuals of the time for seeing the truth around them and voicing concerns but ultimately stresses their inability to productively make a change: 'Like their colleagues of all epochs, intellectuals of Late Byzantium were best at criticising, warning, and predicting; less good at detecting the cause of events and at offering constructive proposals. But they were not blind.'[48] In writing about Manuel II's epistolary corpus, George Dennis describes the flourishing rhetorical tradition in the face of Ottoman aggression as a 'fundamental dishonesty': 'while living in one world, they [Manuel's writings] speak from another'.[49] Amidst the dire circumstances of the period, the practice of writing, exchanging and listening to the letters read aloud salon-style is seen by Dennis as profoundly disingenuous escapism. 'It was,' Dennis suspects, 'one way of closing one's eyes to the reality and living in an illusion.'[50]

In the face of pronounced socio-economic exigencies, however, Later Byzantine emperors did not merely close their eyes and pray, but actively sought to ameliorate their standing in the wider Late medieval world by creatively adapting to the changed circumstances in terms of diplomacy (this, again, is Necipoğlu's position), and cultural production figured prominently in this agenda (this, again, is my argument).[51] Key to both positions is an acknowledgement of the active cultivation and projection of eternal imperium as a strategy, not an escape. With decline looming large, emperors promoted a distinct appearance of timelessness as a means of exercising agency within the tight constraints of a much-diminished Byzantine world. The projection of an image seemingly impervious to change should not be seen as escapist or delusional but instead as strategic. Again, there was a timeliness to this cultivation of timelessness.

One is left to wonder, in closing, how distinctive these debates are to Later Byzantium. Social historians of art would acknowledge the asymmetrical relationship between culture and politics in any period. The very assumption that political and economic decline should automatically signal cultural decline is flawed in its logic; it follows then as equally problematic to isolate Later Byzantium as a special case for this seeming paradox. What is distinctive about our case study, however, is the fact of the end of the Empire: the weight of Byzantium's fall has dictated our perception of its final centuries. The very use of the word 'decline' forestalls our ability to assess the period fairly because modern historians have associated it so closely with 'fall'.[52]

The term 'crisis' offers an instructive counterpoint. Most scholars would agree that crisis can be terribly productive, especially for the arts. This rather general statement bears clear implications for art historians of a wide range of periods and terrains. As but one example, the celebrated reliquary statue of St Foy at Conques sits at the centre of a new corpus of golden statues that came into being

Figure 3.4 Church of the Chora, Kariye Camii, Constantinople (Istanbul).

Source: Photo: Andrea Mattiello.

precisely as the dynastic system of Early medieval Europe was breaking down. Amy Remensnyder sees this innovation as prompted by new forms of competition for power, with the result that the golden sacred figures 'emanated the authority' that their patrons craved but did not necessarily possess.[53] The development of this profoundly original art form was therefore aspirational, a position that resonates strongly with my understanding of Later Byzantine art and diplomacy. In Europe, around the year 1000, the moment of instability that generated newness was not described as decline but as crisis, the implication being that it was temporally discrete and was overcome. Similarly in Byzantium, before the Palaiologan period, times of trouble that prompted innovation are described more often as crises. Iconoclasm, whose destructive forces prompted the redefinition of the Orthodox sacred image, is a case in point. It resulted in a crisis of representation that was, ultimately, overcome and became celebrated as the Triumph of Orthodoxy. On the other hand, in Later Byzantine Constantinople, the glimmering tesserae of the church of the Chora (Figure 3.4) are contrasted with the fiscal 'decline' of the Empire whose purse strings were held by its patron Theodore Metochites. The semantic difference between crisis and decline hinges on teleology. A crisis is understood as temporary (a hiccup, if you will). But in Later Byzantium, moments of chaos and instability are thought to participate in a progressive state of degeneration, incapable of being surmounted because modern scholars, in hindsight, know how the story ended; but the Byzantines did not.

Notes

1 'Twilight' features in both historical and art-historical studies of the Palaiologan period, see Head (1977) and Ćurčić and Mouriki (1991).
2 Evans (2004); Brooks (2006).
3 To be clear, the Byzantines understood themselves and their Empire as 'Roman' (*basileia ton Rhomaion*). The question of the 'Romanness' of Byzantium has generated much scholarship. See, most recently, Kaldellis (2015), and Stouraitis (2014). German Humanist Hieronymus Wolf used the term 'Byzantine' in 1557 as a means of distinguishing the eastern Roman Christian Empire of the Middle Ages from the Roman Empire of antiquity. On the politics of this date for the exhibition, see Gerstel (2005: 331). On the periodisation and cyclicality associated with 1453, see Lawton (2007) and Heilo (2014). The recent *Cambridge History of Byzantium* concludes with 1492 in lieu of 1453 (see Shepard 2008).
4 Evans and Wixom (1997), note also Eastmond (2013).
5 On two separate occasions, Orthodoxy was compromised in the service of diplomatic exigencies: at the Council of Lyons in 1274 and the Council of Ferrara-Florence in 1439. Scholarship on this issue is vast. For Oikonomides (1992: 75), religion assumed a primary role in Palaiologan diplomacy; he had in mind Unionate negotiations with the Latin West in particular.
6 Ćurčić and Mouriki's article concludes: 'In an age of bleak realities, the Byzantines sought refuge in the spiritual realm, in visions of their past, in the reaffirmation of their ideological and religious values, in the dreams of a world they once knew and desperately continued to seek to the very end.' (1991: 3).
7 Necipoğlu (2011: 285).
8 Ibid.: 286.
9 Ibid.: 288.
10 Hilsdale (2014).
11 Necipoğlu too questions whether the 'political decline and military defeat, made worse by economic and financial problems as well as social and religious conflicts' can truly 'justify the prevailing modern conception of the entire era as a mere prelude to 1453, constituting a combination of events that anticipated the eventual fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans' (Necipoğlu 2011: 285–6).
12 On the place of Gibbon in the literature on decline, see the relevant chapters in the following two collections: Bowersock, Clive and Graubard (1977) and McKitterick and Quinault (1997). For a succinct overview of these vast issues, including a contextualisation of Gibbon in terms of British imperialism, see Haarer (2010).
13 Throughout this chapter, all Gibbon references are from Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. David Womersley (London: Allen Lane/New York: Penguin Press, 1994). Anthony Bryer, 'Gibbon and the Later Byzantine Empires', in McKitterick and Quinault (1997: 101–16), discusses the sources used by Gibbon for his section on the Later Byzantine period as well as the chronology of the text's composition.
14 Gibbon ([1827] 1994: 765).
15 Ibid.: 894–909.
16 Ibid.: 894.
17 Gibbon himself was not subtle about his prejudices: 'the Greeks were stationary or retrograde, while the Latins were advancing with rapid and progressive motion' (ibid.: 895).
18 Maria Mavroudi stresses the importance of Ostrogorsky in this regard, ranking his book as 'the most widely read introduction to Byzantine studies in the second half of the twentieth century in many European languages' (Mavroudi 2015: 34–5, note 29).
19 Goldschmidt's metaphor is invoked by Panofsky (1960: 153).
20 Ševčenko (1961: 173). Note that these terms are direct quotations.

21 Ibid.: 182. While the sense of the present not living up to the past had been voiced many times before, 'The notions of impending doom and of inferiority to the past became much more pronounced in the final stage of the Empire's history. This final stage began in about 1300' (ibid.: 171).

22 Ibid.: 183.

23 Some key thinkers such as Metochites did see on the horizon an end to the Empire, see discussion below.

24 The question of the effectiveness of diplomatic strategies is common to the scholarship on diplomacy in all periods of the Empire. Kazhdan's Introduction to Shepard and Franklin's *Byzantine Diplomacy* charts the transformation of Byzantine diplomacy over time from the breakdown of the satellite system of the earlier period, to balanced relationships in the middle period to an imbalanced relationship in the later period, leaving the Empire 'no choice but to assume the role of a humble suppliant' (Shepard and Franklin 1992: 21).

25 The Last Days, as the late Angela Volan explained, 'promised the renewal of the empire and its political institutions, rather than their total destruction'. See Volan (2005: 424). She continues: 'For the Byzantines, salvation was *through* empire, rather than from it.'

26 This manuscript (Plut.gr.57.40, fol. 284r) is discussed in Papaioannou (2013).

27 According to Ševčenko, 'under the impact of changing reality, [Byzantine intellectuals] rearranged their ideas of the historical process' (1961: 181).

28 Ibid.: 183; see also Shawcross (2017).

29 On the Modena manuscript, see Spatharakis 1(976: 182–3); Gratziou (1997); Volan (2005: 63–72); and Albani (2002: 101–3) (cat. no. 35). Gratziou provides a succinct overview of the history of the manuscript and its publication.

30 Volan (2005: 65).

31 These include Andronikos III, John VI Kantakouzenos and John V on the upper row; Andronikos IV, John VII and Manuel II on the middle row; and John VIII and Constantine XI on the bottom row.

32 Constantine I is also represented in the lower right margin of folio 74r.

33 Volan (2005: 70).

34 Ibid.: 10. In Byzantium, there was nothing comparable to the hallucinogenic visions of the End in the illustrated commentaries on Revelation by Beatus of Liébana in Spain or the monumental Majestas Domini tympana of Romanesque portals in France. And yet Volan makes a strong case for apocalypticism in Byzantine art, proposing that Byzantine imagery of the Last Judgement before 1453 served as a kind of anchor for apocalyptic history, even if the apocalypse itself was not represented directly.

35 The visual iteration of this oracular material emerges in the wake of the Ottoman conquests of Constantinople as part of the development of the mythology of the return of the Last Emperor. The sixteenth-century Marciana Klonzas manuscript exemplifies this vividly. Charles Barber addresses aspects of Klontzas' work with the oracles of Leo the Wise in his forthcoming study of late sixteenth-century Cretan painting: *The Icon in the Era of Art: Poetics and Painting in Renaissance Crete.*

36 Volan (2005: 78).

37 On the church of the Sotir (Panteloi) and the church of the Panagia south of Rethymo, see Volan (2005).

38 Ševčenko (1961: 183).

39 This manuscript, Département des Objets d'art MR 416, has also been erroneously cited as Ivoires A53 and A100, owing to discrepancies in early Louvre inventories. See Durand (1992: 463–4) (cat. no. 353); Gaborit-Chopin (1991: 276–7) (cat. no. 60).

40 To be clear on the chronology: the emperor started his homeward voyage at the end of 1402, arriving back in Constantinople in May 1403; Chrysoloras delivered the book to Saint-Denis in the spring of 1408. See Hilsdale (2014: Chapter 4) especially pp. 214–27, and Hilsdale (2017: 151–78).

41 Folio 5r of the Barberini Psalter (Vat Barb. Gr. 372) constitutes, essentially, a scene of investiture with an enthroned Christ above the emperor and empress, with their

son positioned between them. The late eleventh-century portrait was later overpainted, but the basic configuration of the scene remained consistent. See Anderson, Canart and Walter (1989: 11–13). The manuscript is digitised and available online at https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Barb.gr.372. One could also think of the codex made for the Empress Eudokia Makrembolitissa (Paris BnF, Gr. 922) that features Constantine X Doukas with Eudokia and two of their children on folio 6r; see Anderson (2008: 17–22). The fourteenth-century Gospels of Tsar Ivan Alexander opens with a more elaborate double-page family portrait; see Evans (2004: 56–7) (cat. no. 27). See also the discussion in Grabar (1936 [1971]: 27), which is the foundational study of imperial imagery in Byzantium. Grabar's book is well contextualised in Walker (2012: 12–19).

42 According to Hilsdale (2014: Chapter 4), the emphasis on the future of Byzantium is informed by the content of the book it prefaces: the Pseudo-Dionysian conception of hierarchy as well as procession and return.

43 For a comparison with specific contemporary French imagery, see Hilsdale (2017: 168–9).

44 Nagel and Wood (2010: 105). For a cautionary take on this position, see Duits (2013: 157–84).

45 ΜΑΝ(ΟΥ)ΗΛ ΕΝ ΧΩ ΤΩ ΘΩ/ΠΙΣΤΟΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ ΡΩΜΑΙ/ΩΝ Ο ΠΑΛΑΙΟΛΟΓΟΣ/ΚΑΙ ΑΕΙ ΑΥΓΟΥΣΤΟΣ [Manuel, faithful in Christ, *basileus* and *autokrator* of the Romans, Palaiologos, ever Augustus].

46 Maguire (1989: 217). This quotation is in reference to Paris, BnF, MS Coislin 79, on which see Evans and Wixom (1997: 207–9) (cat. no. 143).

47 I would like to thank Glenn Peers for his input on this point.

48 Ševčenko (1961: 186).

49 Dennis (1977: xviii). He elaborates this position vividly: 'With Turkish siege weapons pounding the city, [Manuel] and his friends could calmly sit around in a "theatre" and applaud a piece of rhetorical fluff being read to them' (ibid.).

50 Ibid.: 135.

51 Necipoğlu (2011), Hilsdale (2014).

52 For this reason, Ruth Macrides has long implored me to stop using the term.

53 Remensnyder (1990: 365), cited in Diebold (1999: 148).

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4 Reconsidering the Early Palaiologan period

Anti-Latin propaganda, miracle accounts, and monumental art

Maria Alessia Rossi

The reign of Andronikos II (1282–1328) was unequivocally a moment of deep crisis.[1] The Empire suffered almost continuous invasions by its neighbours, enemies, and allies: Turks, Bulgars, Serbs, Venetians, and Catalans. Yet, although Byzantine political power was weakened and its military strength undermined, these years were characterised by an extraordinary artistic and cultural flourishing.[2] Under Andronikos, 10 monasteries were built from scratch, and at least 22 underwent renovations.[3] Also, 36 *vitae* dedicated to contemporary men and women have survived from the Palaiologan period and approximately 125 hagiographical works, devoted to saints who lived before the thirteenth century, have come down to us, 65 of which are from the Early Palaiologan period.[4]

We are used to associating political and military empowerment with cultural and artistic flourishing. So how can we explain the paradox underlying Andronikos' reign? Could this be a period of ruin as well as of renewal? This chapter will address this paradox by examining monumental art, in particular the episode of Christ Healing the Multitude in the miracle cycle in the monastery of Chora in Constantinople, and two textual sources, the account of miracles written by the ecclesiastical historian Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos (b. 1256), and Patriarch Athanasios' posthumous miracles by the hagiographer and hymnographer Theoktistos the Stoudite (d. after the 1340s). By pairing written and visual evidence regarding miracles, the aim is to suggest a different interpretation of the Early Palaiologan period, challenging the traditional idea of 'decline'.[5] The examination of contemporary political and religious figures, their policies, literary production, and patronage will allow new light to be shed on the cultural milieu surrounding Emperor Andronikos II and to read this interest in miracles as the outcome of Byzantine court culture.

Michael VIII (1259–82), Andronikos' father, left the Empire in a state of strife, having forced through the Union of Lyons.[6] The Union aimed to reconcile the Eastern and Western Churches and was opposed for various reasons by many different factions, including the Arsenites, led by Patriarch Joseph, and the clergy. Furthermore, a significant portion of the population and the monks was against any alteration of the Orthodox creed and in particular against the introduction of the hated *filioque* formula, since they believed that the continuity and fortune of the Empire depended on the purity of their faith. Consequently, in their eyes,

altering the creed and reaching a compromise with the Latins amounted to a conscious act of calling down misfortune on themselves.[7]

Andronikos' first imperial act was to reject the Union of Lyons and restore the Orthodox Church. Andronikos was extremely concerned to re-establish a sense of unity among his subjects. To do so, he promoted a moral regeneration by empowering the religious element and the patriarchate in order to counterbalance the brief Union with the Latins and thereby save the Empire from imminent downfall. As a consequence, in the last decades of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries, the Orthodox Church became the dominant influence in the Empire's internal affairs.

This symbiotic partnership between spiritual and temporal powers was perfectly embodied by Andronikos II and Athanasios I.[8] Athanasios was patriarch twice, from 1289 to 1293 and from 1303 until 1309.[9] His career was stormy; monks were enthusiastic about his austerity and desire for moral regeneration, while the clergy and the higher ranks of secular power condemned his extreme measures. In one of Athanasios' epistles addressed to the emperor, the relationship between the Church and the imperial office is clearly exemplified: 'your divine majesty [i.e. Andronikos] has a just obligation to Him [Christ], to set nothing in this world before the protection and honour of the churches, and to strive vigilantly on their behalf'.[10]

Athanasios and Andronikos worked together to promote the religious element; the former had an ambitious programme, including the imposition of canons and laws, constant public litanies in order to please God, and the reformation of the Church. To enforce these acts, it was necessary to confirm the legitimacy and superiority of the Orthodox Church both within the Empire and towards the exterior, especially against the Church of Rome. The most striking outcomes of this policy were the proliferation of newly active miraculous shrines, saints' relics and lives, miracle accounts, and new iconographic cycles, such as the cycle of the miracles of Christ.[11]

Miracles could be interpreted (and used) on multiple levels. First, they were testimony to Christ's powers. Needless to say, the most important rite within Christian liturgy is also the most remarkable miracle performed by Christ in his lifetime: the Eucharist. Miracles, however, recalled not only the Life of Christ but also that of contemporary figures, as we shall see with the posthumous miracles of Athanasios; healings could also remind the viewer of a miracle s/he had witnessed themselves; in addition, they ultimately became the easiest way to promote the sanctity of the Orthodox Church, in opposition to the Latin faith. It is in these years that the patriarchate of Constantinople established a procedure for the official legitimisation of new saints and it was specifically based on the examination of miracles.[12]

To date, each of these manifestations of miracles has been treated separately, partially considering the different media as fixed boundaries. Instead, in this chapter, both written and visual evidence regarding miracles have been collected in order to compare them. Starting with Christ's miracles, these are rarely found in monumental depictions before the thirteenth century.[13] However, between the 1280s and 1330s – that is, precisely in the reign of Andronikos – this iconography abruptly proliferates.[14] The miracle cycle could include any of the miracles performed by

Christ during his lifetime, amounting to c. 60 episodes.[15] No precise pattern has been identified by scholars for the selection and arrangement of these episodes.

The monastery of Chora preserves one of the most extensive and lavish miracle cycles.[16] It is located in the narthex and exonarthex and originally comprised 36 episodes, 28 of which are now preserved. The monastery was restored and richly decorated with mosaics between 1316 and 1321 by Theodore Metochites (1270–1332), who was considered at the time 'the richest and most powerful man in the Empire after the Emperor'.[17] The church was a renewed imperial foundation, already associated in time with the Emperor Justinian (527–65) and the *sebastokrator* Isaac Komnenos (b. 1093).[18] Metochites, a statesman by day, scholar by night and, in the last years of his life, a monk, was an extremely learned and prolific writer. His oeuvre included astronomical treatises, philosophical commentaries, autobiographical poetry, and orations. It would be highly unlikely for his personality not to have influenced the iconographic programme of Chora.[19] While, as previously said, the miracle cycle does not have fixed rules, I believe that the iconographical choices in Chora were carefully made, to present new and innovative readings of miraculous episodes. This chapter will focus on only one example, Christ Healing the Multitude (Figure 4.1).[20]
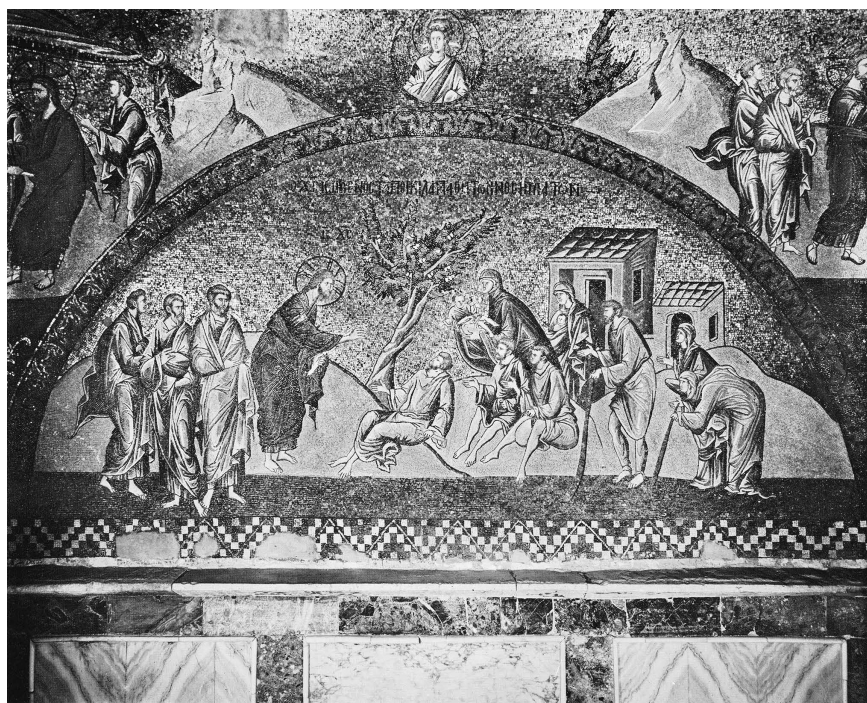

Figure 4.1 Church of the Chora, Kariye Camii, Constantinople (Istanbul), fourth bay of the inner narthex, western lunette, the Healing of the Multitude, mosaic (1316–21).

Source: Underwood (1966–75), vol. 2: 277, Figure 141.

This scene is extremely unusual: it is rarely found in monumental decorations before the thirteenth century, and subsequently, in the Early Palaiologan period, it appears in only two instances: the Metropolis in Mystras and the Chora monastery.[21] In Chora, the composition is divided in two by a tree: Christ is represented on the left with a few disciples and the crowd of sick people are on the right.

The inscription 'Christ healing those afflicted with various diseases' and the lack of details in the scene do not provide indications of a specific miracle.[22] Paul Underwood has argued that, out of the 17 accounts in the Gospels[23] referring to Christ healing large numbers of sick and afflicted persons,[24] the episode in Chora probably refers to Matthew 15:30–1, where a detailed mention is made of different illnesses cured by Christ:

> And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them, so that the crowd wondered, when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel.[25]

However, the crowd as depicted in this scene is characterised by several additional diseases not described by Matthew. For instance, the artist must have used figures taken from other well-established and independent miracles, such as the Women Bent Double, and this can be explained by the fact that there is no iconographic tradition to this miracle.[26] The third man from the left, characterised by a disproportionate tumour between his knees, needs further attention (Figure 4.2). To my knowledge, there is no reference to such a disease in the Gospels and this is the first instance where it is represented. From where did the artist take inspiration and why? To answer this question, we need to turn to what could be regarded as Chora's textual equivalents: the miracle accounts written by the ecclesiastical historian, Nikephoros Xanthopoulos, and the monk, Theoktistos the Stoudite. The former was born around 1256 and is renowned for the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, a 23-volume narrative, of which only 18 books survive, that traces the history of Christianity from its origins to the seventh century, and was dedicated to Andronikos II. Other works by him include patristic commentaries, ecclesiastical treatises, and liturgical orations. Among these, I will focus on his account of miraculous cures that took place at the monastery of the Zoodochos Pege in Constantinople in his own time.[27] This shrine, says the legend, was founded by Emperor Leo I (457–74) on the site of a miraculous spring, and over the centuries it was enlarged and embellished several times.[28] Xanthopoulos recounts that, during the Latin Kingdom, when the monastery was occupied by Latin monks, the waters of the spring ceased to produce miraculous cures. Even when Michael VIII reconquered Constantinople, the spring remained ineffective. It was only with the accession of Andronikos, who reversed his father's ecclesiastical policy, that the waters of the holy spring began once more to effect healing cures. These events were clearly presented by Xanthopoulos in order to stress the primacy of the Orthodox faith and prove the Virgin's favour towards Andronikos' religious policy.

Figure 4.2 Church of the Chora, Kariye Camii, Constantinople (Istanbul), fourth bay of the inner narthex, western lunette, the Healing of the Multitude, detail, mosaic (1316–21).

Source: Underwood (1966–75), vol. 2: 279, Figure 141.

Among the miraculous cures Xanthopoulos witnessed, he recounts the following miracle:

> To another man, his fatherland was Serres, a tumour threatening death grew on the upper part of his private parts. This having occupied that area was creating excessive and vehement pain all around. Spreading everywhere the rumours of the miracles (of the spring of the Zoodochos Pege), they arrived to him, and with flying feet he went to the naos, and when he arrived he tried to relieve the sufferings with the water from the spring. But the ulcer appeared to be aggravating, taking a shape similar to a large mushroom, assuming such dimensions in little time, and stretched to a great extent.[29]

This is the first instance where this written and visual material has been paired. The outcome of this comparison is remarkable: Xanthopoulos effectively describes the symptoms of what is known today as cancer, demonstrating a great medical knowledge; this same knowledge is found also in the mosaics, as a fragment of real life the viewer could identify.[30] Xanthopoulos wrote the account in the same

years the Chora monastery was being decorated. The monasteries of Chora and the Zoodochos Pege were (and still are) in the same city, and not far away from each other.[31] Furthermore, Metochites, the patron of Chora, was part of the same cultural milieu as Xanthopoulos: they were both close to Andronikos II. We know they were friends and epistolary correspondence between the two has survived.[32] While it would be tempting to suggest that the mosaic in Chora was based on Xanthopoulos' account, perhaps it is wiser to refrain. Metochites, in his letter to the monks of the Chora, urges them to 'Show compassion towards the sick and be ready to extend all possible help to them through means which, as you well know, have been available in the monastery for that purpose for a long time, from the very beginning.'[33] Chora's hospital, explains Metochites, is both for those who are inside the monastery and for 'outsiders, whoever they may be'.[34] This might explain the similarities: just as Xanthopoulos recorded an illness he saw at the shrine, so the artist working at Chora took inspiration from the nearby hospital.

Xanthopoulos also mentions healings of women with an issue of blood, blind men, and paralytics, all of which are depicted in Chora. In these instances, rather than acknowledging a relationship between those who need healing, such as the representation of contemporary illnesses in Christ's multitude, he compares those who perform the healing, that is the spring water of the Zoodochos Pege and Christ. When recounting the miraculous healing of a blind man at the shrine, he equates it with the New Testament narrative of the Healing of the Man Born Blind. The same happens in miracle 61, when a 'long-time paralytic' is associated with the Paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda.[35] The biblical narrative paired with the textual evidence emphasises the relationship between Christ's miracles and the miraculous cures of Xanthopoulos' and Metochites' times. The believer is encouraged to associate Christ's miraculous episodes as depicted in Chora with those that occurred at the Pege, or at any other healing shrine.

The freedom displayed by the artist in the Healing of the Multitude is also worthy of note. As mentioned earlier, this could be explained by the fact that this episode has no established iconographic tradition. Surprisingly, a similar figure can be identified at the far right of the same episode in the monastery of Dečani (completed by 1335).[36] On this occasion, the man is not seated but standing, supporting himself on a staff (Figure 4.3). Although this is not the right place to discuss this, the fact that this episode appears in a slightly altered version in Dečani sheds light on the artistic exchange between Byzantine and Serbian monumental decorations in the fourteenth century.

Finally, let me now examine the *Logos* of the posthumous miracles attested at the tomb of Patriarch Athanasios in the monastery he founded on the hill of Xerolophos in Constantinople.[37] The author, Theoktistos the Stoudite, as the name suggests, was probably in later life a monk at the monastery of Stoudion in Constantinople.[38] He wrote a *vita* and *enkomion*, shortly after Athanasios' death in the 1320s, and a *Logos* on the translation of his relics and his posthumous miracles in the 1330s.[39]

In several instances, Theoktistos, like Xanthopoulos, compares miracles in the Gospels to contemporary healings. One of the most notable miracles occurred to a young man named Manuel Bourdes, who became 'mute and deaf like the
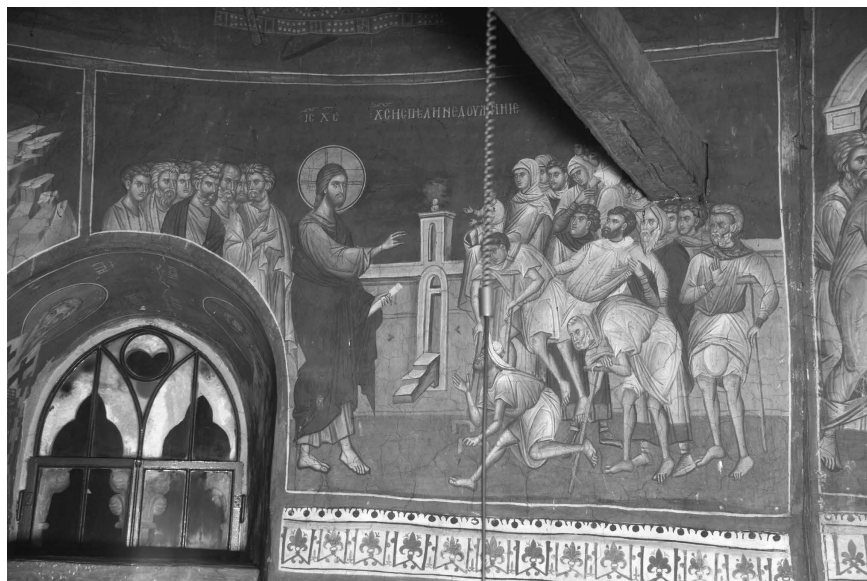
Figure 4.3 Katholikon of the Monastery of Dečani, apse, fourth register from the top, the Healing of the Multitude, fresco (completed by 1335).

Source: Photo: Courtesy of BLAGO Fund, USA/Serbia) www.srpskoblago.org

boy in the gospel'.[40] Theoktistos also recounts the story of a woman who had remained motionless on a pallet for four whole years, like the paralytic in the Gospel. On this occasion, Athanasios and Christ are directly associated: 'O, your miraculous works, Christ the King, effected through your servants!'[41] Similarly, when describing the famine of 1306–07, Theoktistos relates that twice the patriarch imitated Christ's distribution of the loaves: though only a small supply of wheat remained in the store house, Athanasios ordered his servant to distribute enough to all the poorer convents of Constantinople and, miraculously, the supply of wheat held out.[42]

Finally, one of the most significant miracles discussed in this chapter is that of a certain woman called Maria, who suffered from a menstrual disorder for 20 years.[43] Maria is compared to the woman with the issue of blood in the Gospel; Maria seeks healing in a conscious attempt to imitate the method indicated by Mark for the woman in the Gospel: while the woman in the Gospel touched the hem of Christ's robe, so Maria stole a tiny piece of the holy garment of Athanasios. However, explains Theoktistos, there is a difference: 'the woman with the issue of blood, approached Christ, while the former approached a disciple and imitator of Christ'.[44] Theoktistos, thus, takes the interpretation of miracles one step further. He associates the events in the Gospel with the miracles performed by Athanasios on three levels: first, he compares the sick person – Maria, with the woman with the issue of blood; second, he likens the two healers, Athanasios and Christ, to the point where the patriarch is twice able to perform the New Testament narrative of

the multiplication of the loaves; finally, he equates the method of healing. Theok-tistos' use of Christ as a way to legitimise Athanasios can be traced back to the canonisation process mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. This process, in the West, had been developed from the late tenth century and by the end of the thirteenth it was well established that 'merits without signs and signs without merits are not sufficient'.[45] While the patriarchate of Constantinople established a procedure for the official sanctioning of the legitimacy of new saints only from the end of the thirteenth century,[46] Ruth Macrides correctly argues that the empha-sis on proof of miracles 'was not a question of the Eastern Church's adoption of Western methods of recognising sanctity. Rather, the Orthodox Church needed to exercise more caution in the face of internal and external pressure', the latter coming from the Church of Rome.[47] The emphasis on miracles in the *Logos* can be explained only by the fact that they were considered to be direct evidence of God's grace, proving that the Orthodox faith was designated by God, in contrast to that of the Church of Rome.[48]

Many modern historians have cited Andronikos II's incompetence and piety as reasons for the decline of the Empire. Yet it was precisely this reverence and sub-mission vis-à-vis the Church that triggered the revival of hagiographical accounts, of miraculous healing and the promotion of relics in shrines and monasteries.[49] Andronikos succeeded in creating a less hostile atmosphere in which art and cul-ture could flourish. This illusory tranquillity and profound piety led members of his closest circles to commission new endowments. It is only when pairing visual and textual evidence that it is possible to read the widespread interest in mira-cles as a product of the cultural milieu surrounding Andronikos. These manifesta-tions, both through text and image, shared the same aims: they managed to create a bridge between the biblical time of the New Testament and the present time of the believer; they allowed the viewer to identify with the images; and they become a vehicle for the dissemination of the anti-Latin propaganda of the Orthodox Church.

In conclusion, rather than being a paradox, I would suggest that ruin and renewal coexisted throughout Andronikos' reign in a cause-effect relationship: the military and political decline created a strenuous atmosphere; as a reaction to the Union of Lyons, the religious element acquired power and became the unifying element both within the Empire and against the Church of Rome. Miracles became one of the many tools to prove the legitimacy of the Orthodox Church and promote its power. By examining contemporary political and religious figures, through written and vis-ual evidence, I have shown their shared interest in promoting the illustration of mira-cles and the multiple layers of meaning and interpretation these episodes offered.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 For the reign of Andronikos II, see Fallier and Laurent (1984–: Books VII–XII); Schopeni (1829–55). Modern accounts are Laiou (1972); Nicol (1993: 93–16).
2 Fryde (2000); Kalopissi-Verti (2006, 2012).
3 Talbot (2001b: 330).
4 Talbot (1991a: 15–26).
5 Past scholarship has dealt with the Late Byzantine period following Gibbon's (1827) tightly intertwined concepts of decline and fall. See also Ćurčić and Mouriki (1991); Nicol (1993: 107–21), Part II, 'Symptoms and Causes of Decline'. More recently, a new and original approach has been suggested by Hilsdale (2014).
6 For Michael VIII, see Geanakoplos (1973). For the Union, see Geanakoplos (1953); Nicol (1961, 1962–64, 1971); Evert-Kappesova (1949, 1952–53, 1955).
7 Geanakoplos (1973: 269–70); Nicol (1993: 72–90). See also Kolbaba (2008).
8 For the relationship between Athanasios I and Andronikos II, see Gill (1970). Also relevant are Laurent (1965) and Fusco (1997).
9 For the patriarchate of Athanasios I, see Boojamra (1993); Talbot (1973, 1975). For his posthumous miracles, see Talbot (1983).
10 Talbot (1975: 30).
11 For the proliferation of miraculous accounts and written sources, see Talbot (1991a, 2011); Efthymiadis (2004).
12 Macrides (1981).
13 For Christ's Miracle Cycle, see Millet (1916); Schiller (1972); Underwood (1975); Gouma-Peterson (1976, 1978); Pasi (1999); Schroeder (2010); Rossi (2016); Rossi (2017). For examples of Christ's miracles before the end of the thirteenth century, see Tomeković (1990–91; 1993). See also Morisani (1962) for the monumental decoration in Sant'Angelo in Formis; Kitzinger (1960) for Monreale; Eastmond (2004) for Trebizond. For a complete list, see Rossi (2017).
14 Alongside Christ's miracles, in the Palaiologan period, other iconographic cycles and narratives are expanded: Dufrenne (1967, 1978).
15 By miracle cycle, I mean an iconographic programme that includes scenes from the life of Christ, excluding the Dodekaorton, with a majority of miracle episodes. The miracle cycle does not exclusively comprise scenes of healings and resurrections. On the contrary, other narratives, such as the mid-Pentecost, Christ among the Doctors, Christ Reading in the Synagogue, and the Purging of the Temple, are included. These, however, are not a random chosen to confirm, establish, and stress Christ's powers. Even if not miracles *per se*, they are clearly selected as prefigurations and signifiers for the miraculous nature of the cycle, see Rossi (2017).
16 Underwood (1966–75); Klein, Ousterhout and Pitarakis (2011).
17 Ousterhout (1987: 34), see footnote 104 with further bibliography. For Metochites, see Ševčenko (1971, 1975).
18 For the numerous restorations and architectural phases, see Ousterhout (1987).
19 Nelson (1999, 2004); Ousterhout (2002).
20 For the Healing of the Multitude, see Pasi (1995). Recently, Glenn Peers has presented a paper on the subject, entitled 'The iconography of healing and damaged bodies in Kariye Camii: methodological reflections' at The Index at 100 – Iconography in a New Century conference that took place at Princeton University.

21　For the Church of St Demetrios, also known as the Metropolis, in Mystras: for the construction phases, see Marinou (2002). For the decorative phases, see Chatzidakis (1979).

22　For the inscription, see Underwood (1966–75), vol. 1: 149–50.

23　The 17 accounts are: Matthew 4:23–4; Matthew 8:16–17; Mark 1:32–4; Luke 4:40–1; Matthew 9:35; Matthew 12:15–16; Mark 3:8–12; Luke 6:17–19; Matthew 14:14; Luke 9:11; John 6:2; Matthew 14:34–6; Mark 6:53–6; Matthew 15:30–1; Matthew 19:2; Matthew 21:14; Mark 6:5.

24　Underwood (1975: 297–301).

25　Translation following the English Standard Version.

26　Underwood (1975: 300). The Healing of the Woman Bent Double is recounted by Luke (13:10–17) and its iconography is characterised by the depiction of an infirm woman supporting herself with a cane. Her back is bent over and she cannot look up, as depicted on the far right in the Healing of the Multitude in Chora.

27　The account by Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos has been preserved in several manuscripts and was published at the beginning of the nineteenth century, see Pamperis (1802). A critical edition, translation and commentary are now being undertaken by Alexakis, Talbot and Rossi. For further contributions, see Talbot (2001a, 2002a); Efthymiadis (2006–07).

28　Alongside Xanthopoulos' account, an anonymous tenth-century account has also been preserved, see Talbot and Johnson (2012).

29　Pamperis (1802: Miracles 50, 68).

30　For the relationship between miracles and medicine, see Metzler (2006); Kuuliala (2014).

31　The monastery of the Zoodochos Pege was completely rebuilt in the nineteenth century and is located just outside the walls of Constantinople.

32　Featherstone (1998); Cunningham, Featherstone and Georgopoulou (1983).

33　Ševčenko (1975: 75).

34　Ibid.: 32, 75, see also Magdalino (2011: 180).

35　Pamperis (1802: Miracle 61).

36　For Dečani, see Djurić (1995). For further discussion of the healing of the multitude in Dečani and the Serbian miracle cycles, see Rossi (2017).

37　Talbot (1983: 11, 14–15); Efthymiadis (2011–14: 128).

38　Talbot (1983: 31–8), especially 33.

39　For the commentary and translation of the *Logos*, see Talbot (1983).

40　Ibid.: 105.

41　Ibid.: 111.

42　Ibid.: 16.

43　Ibid.: 113.

44　Ibid.: 113.

45　Klaniczay (2004: 118).

46　Among the earliest examples of canonisation is Patriarch Arsenios in the late thirteenth century, see Talbot (1983: 21–30; 1991b).

47　Macrides (1981: 87). See also Goodich (2007) and Mesley and Wilson (2014).

48　This notion is further expressed by Theodore Agallianos in his 1440s' 'Dialogue Against the Latins', see Macrides (1981: 86).

49　Talbot (2002b).

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5 How to illustrate a scientific treatise in the Palaiologan period

Andrew Griebeler

Studies of Palaiologan book arts often centre on the copying of deluxe manuscripts in the service of the Orthodox Church.[1] Because the art of the Palaiologan period consequently appears bound to the needs and strictures of Orthodox theology and practice, it has even been characterised in general as the product of a 'Counter-Renaissance'.[2] Yet the Palaiologan period also saw the illustration of many scientific and technical treatises.[3] This chapter shows that the illustration of Palaiologan scientific texts differs from that of the other, mostly religious, manuscripts of the period in four crucial ways. First, Palaiologan scientific illustration tended to involve a greater degree of collaboration between painters, scholars, and scribes. Second, scholars and specialists appear to have been largely responsible for the commissioning of such works. Imperial and aristocratic patronage played a relatively limited role. Third, the often *ad hoc* nature of Palaiologan scientific illustration resulted in a variety of production practices that are otherwise rare in the broader history of Byzantine manuscript illustration. Finally, although the imagery and scripts in Palaiologan manuscripts are often archaising emulations of Middle Byzantine models, scientific manuscripts demonstrate their own idiosyncratic approaches to archaism and novelty.

Collaboration

Despite some notable exceptions, illustrations for deluxe religious manuscripts in the Palaiologan period were typically produced separately from the text and apparently involved limited interaction between painters and scribes.[4] Scribes or commissioners could procure illustrations and add them as needed to texts, already copied. By contrast, evidence suggests that illustrated scientific treatises involved greater degrees of direct interaction and collaboration between scribes and illustrators.

In his treatise on lunar theory, the scholar Demetrios Triklinios (fl. 1308–25/30) compares the surface of the moon, which he says resembles the figure of a man, to the terrain of our sublunary sphere.[5] He and his assistant observed the moon using a mirror, which, he adds, his readers can also do in order to verify his observations.[6] He names his assistant as John Astrapas, 'the most excellent among scribes/painters (*grapheus*) of our time, who makes Thessaloniki, our fatherland, rich'.[7] While the meaning of the term *grapheus* could suggest either a painter or a scribe,

the name Astrapas has been linked to a family of painters from Thessaloniki at the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries.[8] Demetrios Triklinios had him assist in documenting the moon's surface – either as a scribe, a painter, or perhaps both.[9] While we do not know how John Astrapas assisted Triklinios in his capacity as a *grapheus*, Triklinios did have a painter illustrate a copy of Hesiod, written in Triklinios's own hand in two phases in 1316 and 1319 (Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, gr. Z. 464 = coll. 762). Hesiod's *Works and Days* exemplified ancient Greek didactic poetry and served as a farming almanac.[10] Triklinios had the painter provide a visual commentary to the text by depicting farming equipment, some of which are shown in use.[11] Italo Furlan has suggested that the well-known Salonican artist George Kalliergis, identified on stylistic grounds, may have illustrated Triklinios's Hesiod.[12]

Astrapas, the family name of the assistant who helped Triklinios in his lunar observations, also appears on the first folio of a copiously illustrated manuscript containing various scientific texts now in the Marciana Library in Venice (Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, gr. Z. 516 = coll. 904).[13] A certain Andreas Telountas from Nauplion copied the bulk of the manuscript in the early fourteenth century.[14] Ptolemy's *Geography* dominates the codex. Its maps appear to have been derived from the text and not from a pre-existing map tradition.[15] They fail to reproduce the correct ratios described in the text. Florian Mittenhuber has called them 'a remarkable but poorly executed attempt to arrive at a new conception of Ptolemy's maps'.[16] The codex also contains Aelian's *Tactica* and Heron of Alexandria's *Automata* and *Pneumatica*, as well as several inserted folios with full-page illustrations of the Christian cosmos, abounding with symbols and personifications relating to the soul, the hours, the planets, the calendar, climates, seasons, bodily humours, ages of the world, and the harmonic properties of sound.[17] Taken together, the illustrations present a Late Byzantine view of the cosmos as an interconnected system under providence and united by principles of harmony and cosmic sympathy. Here the natural sciences are integrated into an Orthodox view of the world. The inserted folios appear to date to roughly the same time as the text and are perhaps the work of the Astrapas who also owned the codex.[18] Francesco Lovino has suggested that Telountas and Astrapas worked 'side by side'.[19] The codex also has two mysterious frontispiece portraits, one of which was later relabelled as Ptolemy.[20]

Although the Marciana Ptolemy maps appear to be less carefully executed and were not based on an antique map tradition, other Palaiologan versions of Ptolemy that do reflect an antique tradition are more accurate.[21] The various copies of Ptolemy's *Geography* indicate that there was considerable interest in the text around 1300.[22] The monk and scholar Maximos Planoudes (c.1255–c.1305), a mentor and friend of Triklinios, is known to have long sought an ancient copy of Ptolemy's *Geography*.[23] Planoudes eventually celebrated the discovery of one manuscript with an epigram, in which he notes that the Byzantine emperor Andronikos II (r. 1282–1328) had Athanasios II, the Patriarch of Alexandria (c.1275–c.1315), help procure a copy of the text.[24] While Planoudes' exact role in the project is unclear, he may have overseen the copying of the text and its accompanying maps. He is known to have corresponded with at least one painter and to have

acted as a middleman in commissioning and overseeing other projects.[25] His epigram, however, does indicate his interest in the visual communication of scientific knowledge. The maps evoke wonder. While marvelling at the details illustrated in them, Planoudes compares them to a flowery meadow and to Athena's colourful robe or *peplos*.[26] He further relates them to contemporary geopolitical concerns by noting that God might yet answer the emperor's prayers and restore the Empire to the ancient boundaries portrayed in the maps.[27]

The direct role that intellectuals could play in the production of illustrated scientific manuscripts is evident over a century later in a sumptuous botanical album now in the Vatican (Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Chigi F.VII.159).[28] Likely copied in Constantinople in the fifteenth century, the codex contains illustrations of plants from earlier manuscripts of Dioscorides' *De materia medica*. It lacks text except for Greek and Latin plant names and some later notes in Latin.[29] Isidore of Kiev (c.1390–1463) may have directed the copying of the codex, as his hand appears in small inscriptions related to the copying of the plant pictures.[30] Another scribe wrote the titles corresponding to the Greek plant names. Isidore could have overseen the production of the manuscript in the 1430s, while he was *hegoumenos* of the monastery of St Demetrios in Constantinople, or perhaps during a later stay in the city, such as in 1450 or 1452–53.[31] That Isidore also owned an unillustrated Dioscorides has led Minta Collins to suggest that he might have had this 'picture book' made to accompany it.[32] It remains possible, too, that the book was used in conjunction with other works, such as a botanical lexicon or a work by another medical authority.

Patronage

Patronage of illustrated scientific treatises is often difficult to determine. Andronikos II's assistance to Planoudes in his recovery of Ptolemy's *Geography* could suggest that members of the imperial family played some role in the production of illustrated scientific manuscripts, especially in acquiring and lending old or rare manuscripts to be copied. In general, however, the limited evidence for imperial commissions of illustrated scientific manuscripts contrasts notably with the many imperial deluxe religious manuscripts that do survive.[33]

While evidence for imperial patronage of scientific treatises is limited, there is some evidence of aristocratic patronage. Frontispieces to a copy of the Hippocratic Corpus now in Paris (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 2144) show the author Hippocrates opposite the manuscript's recipient, Alexios Apokaukos, accompanied by a figure, perhaps a personification of Medicine.[34] Verses surrounding the portraits form a dialogue between Hippocrates and Apokaukos. They extol the elevated place of medicine among the sciences and honour both author and recipient for their devotion to it, despite Apokaukos also having numerous duties as a military commander.[35] An inscription above the miniature calling Apokaukos *megas doux* suggests the frontispieces date to between November 1341, when he received the title, and his assassination on 11 June 1345.[36] This dating puts the production of the frontispieces in the midst of the civil war, 1341–47, between John VI Kantakouzenos and the regent Anna of Savoy.

Less deluxe frontispieces appear in a copy of Nicholas Myrepsos's *Dynameron*, a massive collection of pharmaceutical recipes, also now in Paris (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 2243).[37] The first frontispiece depicts the scene of a patient visiting a physician with a Deësis above it consisting of Christ enthroned, the dove of the Holy Spirit, John the Baptist, the Virgin, and the Archangels Gabriel and Michael (Figure 5.1). The beginning of the text on the

Figure 5.1 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, gr. 2243, copied in 1339, f. 10v. Frontispiece from the Paris manuscript of Nicholas Myrepsos's *Dynameron* with a scene of a patient consulting a physician, while Christ, John the Baptist, the Virgin, and Archangels appear above.

Source: Photo: Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

verso of the next folio appears in an ornate architectural frame with the Annunciation above it.[38] Here medical knowledge is visibly subordinated to – but also integrated within – a broader Orthodox understanding of the cosmos. Unlike the frontispieces in the Apokaukos Hippocrates, those in the Paris *Dynameron* do not explicitly connect the codex's contents to its recipient. At the end of the codex, however, we read that Kosmas Kamelos, a priest and exarch for the metropolitan of Athens, finished copying the codex for the physician Demetrios Chlomos in August 1339.[39] That the recipient (and presumed commissioner) of the manuscript was a physician may reflect a broader trend whereby the patrons of scientific treatises were often the very same intellectuals and experts who used them. This pattern of patronage contrasts with other forms of manuscript patronage, in which aristocrats or members of the imperial family commissioned manuscripts or illustrations as gifts for other elites, religious foundations, or foreign powers.[40]

Production patterns

The frontispieces in the Apokaukos Hippocrates are on parchment and were created separately from the main text, which was copied on paper by the scribe Alexios Pyropoulos.[41] The copying of the main text preceded the frontispieces. Apokaukos may have acquired and personalised the codex only later, some time after its copying. During the Palaiologan period, this method of illustration was commonly employed for deluxe religious manuscripts, especially so as to provide Gospels with portraits of Evangelists.[42] This method of illustration is, by contrast, rare in illustrated scientific manuscripts.[43] In the Paris *Dynameron*, we can see that Kosmas Kamelos copied not only the text, but also the frontispieces.[44] Palaiologan scribes often executed ornamental headpieces and tailpieces, initials, and sometimes even full illustrations.[45] In such cases, the scribe typically prepared the text first and then added illustrations and ornament, sometimes in the same ink or in red.[46] Alternatively, and typically in more humble works, she or he might copy pictures and text sequentially as encountered in the model, with the result that it is difficult to separate production into discrete stages of illustration and text copying.[47]

Scribes may have acted as illustrators for more modest works, either due to material costs or a pressing need for the volume to serve an immediate practical role. In such works, the scribe may also have been the principal user or recipient of the codex. For example, the main text and illustrations in a mid-fifteenth-century paper codex with medical and occult texts, now in Bologna, appear to have been the work of a physician, identified in a note as John of Aro(n) (Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS 3632).[48] He illustrated the work with hundreds of pen and wash illustrations, some of which he inscribed with abbreviated names of colours, evidently so as to finish colouring them at a later time.[49]

Illustrations for scientific treatises could also be executed prior to the copying of the text. This sequence of production appears, for example, in a mid-fourteenth-century botanical codex now in Padua (Padua, Biblioteca del Seminario Vescovile, cod. 194).[50] This picture-first sequence of illustration is

evident from the arrangement of text around the figures illustrated (e.g., f. 143v, Figure 5.2).[51] The lines of text begin and stop following the outer contours of the picture. In order to copy the text in this way, the scribe had to have known the exact shape and position of the figure, presumably because it had already been copied prior to the copying of the text. Elsewhere the text even appears to overlap the picture, thereby confirming that the illustrations preceded the text.[52] That some pictures lack texts also points to the picture-first method of illustration.[53] The copying of

Figure 5.2 Padua, Biblioteca del Seminario Vescovile, cod. 194, mid-fourteenth century, f. 143v. Illustration of squill (*skilla, Drimia maritima* (L.) Stearn) from an illustrated version of Dioscorides' *De materia medica*.

Source: Photo: Biblioteca Antica del Seminario Vescovile di Padova.

pictures prior to text is a notable departure from the usual sequence of production. In most illustrated Byzantine manuscripts, a scribe typically prepared the folios, arranged gatherings, and then copied the text, leaving spaces for an illustrator to fill in later.[54] This text-first system of production emphasises the accurate transmission of text by ensuring that it fits the available space. In contrast, the picture-first sequence of the Padua codex prioritises the transmission of illustrations over the text.

The practice of copying pictures prior to the text culminates in the production of 'picture books' completely devoid of a main text, such as Isidore of Kiev's botanical album. But botanical works were not the only scientific 'picture books' produced during the Palaiologan period. In a fourteenth- or fifteenth-century codex with various astronomical texts, now in the Vatican, we also find a series of careful pen and ink drawings of constellations (Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 1087).[55] The fifteenth-century codex connected to John of Aro(n) and now in Bologna also includes many pen and wash illustrations of plants, occult subjects, and medical procedures, many without explanatory texts.[56] It remains unclear when the practice of making such 'picture books' originated. A note in a copy of an Arabic translation of Dioscorides could suggest that such volumes existed as early as 1219 CE, at least in Arabic.[57] Botanical 'picture books' were also produced in Northern Italy from the fourteenth century on.[58] Such cases could suggest that Late Byzantine modes of scientific illustration correspond to developments in the visualisation of scientific knowledge that occurred elsewhere in the medieval world.

Archaism and novelty

Palaiologan scientific illustrations also differ from other kinds of illustration in their approach to archaism and novelty. Illustrated scientific manuscripts tend to contain novel imagery more often than other illustrated Palaiologan manuscripts. Several difficulties attend the identification of novelty in illustrated Byzantine manuscripts. First, Byzantine attitudes towards novelty and innovation were often ambivalent at best.[59] But while novelty was to be avoided in certain areas, especially in religious teaching and practice, it might at other times have been encouraged in areas such as the secular arts and sciences. A second difficulty arises from an incomplete material record due to the capricious nature of the preservation of manuscripts. That the earliest surviving illustrated version of a scientific treatise dates to the Palaiologan period does not mean that it was first illustrated at that time. What exists now is only a fraction of what once did. As a result, it can be difficult to say if a given illustration is the first of its kind or if it is a copy of an earlier one, now lost. Palaiologan copies of the maps from Ptolemy's *Geography* illustrate some of these complexities. Some maps, such as those in the Marciana Ptolemy, were likely inventions of the Palaiologan period. Others, however, as Florian Mittenhuber has shown, were copied from earlier manuscripts.[60]

Planoudes' interest in ancient copies of Ptolemy also suggests some of the motivations for archaism in scientific illustration. The ancient maps were not

only extremely rare, but also more accurate. In a similar way, some Byzantine depictions of the zodiac go back to extremely old models that had long fallen out of use in both the Latin West and the Islamic world.[61] Planoudes' interest in ancient copies of Ptolemy's *Geography* and the archaising depictions of the zodiac should be distinguished from the broader Palaiologan enthusiasm for Middle Byzantine scripts, ornament, and imagery. Many scientific manuscripts also demonstrate the same archaising scripts, ornament, and imagery found in other Palaiologan manuscripts. But Planoudes' maps and the archaising zodiacs appear to be less the products of a contemporary taste for Middle Byzantine book arts than reclamations of ancient knowledge that was perhaps regarded as more useful or accurate.

In addition to earlier, even ancient, manuscripts, Byzantine scientific manuscripts sometimes adapted imagery from foreign sources. This appears to be the case with a deluxe fourteenth-century copy of Theon of Alexandria's commentary on Ptolemy's *Handy Tables* now in Milan (Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, H. 57 sup. = 437). The codex was copied in Constantinople around the year 1358 and continued to be in use for about a century.[62] Its numerous illustrations of planets carrying zodiac signs derive from iconographic traditions ultimately originating in the Islamic world and are unique in the history of Byzantine art.[63]

The makers of Byzantine scientific illustrations could also add to and update earlier works. Sometimes such additions take the form of repairs.[64] For example, a thirteenth-century paper gathering was added to the sixth-century Vienna Dioscorides in order to substitute for a missing entry on mandrake.[65] In other cases, however, later users clearly sought to improve earlier illustrations. Also in the same codex, beneath the original entry on Spanish broom (*spartos*, *Spartium junceum* L.), a thirteenth-century hand sketched the plant.[66] The original sixth-century illustration of *spartos* is extant, so the sketch cannot be a repair. Rather, the sketch gives a more detailed account of the plant's seedpods and flowers.[67] That this sketch was later copied into the Padua codex in the fourteenth century suggests that contemporaries recognised its contribution and considered it worthy of copying.[68] The introduction of this new illustration of Spanish broom into both the Vienna and the Padua codices shows that Late Byzantine scholars could also update and even improve upon the pictures in earlier scientific treatises.

Illustrated scientific treatises from the Palaiologan era occasionally contain other novelties. Among the illustrations in a late fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century codex now in Paris (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 36), Andreas Xyngopoulos has noted a rare self-portrait of an artist, the monk Nikodemos.[69] Nikodemos portrays himself at the low point in a cosmic *rota fortunae* (Figure 5.3).[70] He refers to himself later in the codex, when he asks readers to think of him as they look upon an illustration of the Allegory of the Tree of Life, taken from the story of Barlaam and Ioasaph.[71] Nikodemos's self-representations do not appear to accompany a particular text in the codex, but rather fit the broader philosophical contents of the codex, which contains not only a variety of medical texts, but also several biblical sapiential books.[72] As Sophia Kalopissi-Verti observes, the 'strong individualism' in Nikodemos's self-representations bespeaks a 'new

Figure 5.3 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, gr. 36, late fourteenth or early
fifteenth century, f. 163v. Cosmic *rota fortunae* with self-portrait of the monk
Nikodemos.

Source: Photo: Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

approach, which can be associated with the social changes of the period of transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance'.[73]

Conclusion

This chapter identifies four points of divergence between the illustration of scientific treatises and the illustration of other (mainly religious) texts in the Palaiologan period: the degree of collaboration between scribes and illustrators, patterns of patronage, patterns of production, and approaches to novelty and archaism. While each of these points deserves further study, the manuscripts discussed here nevertheless permit several conclusions.

Scientific illustrations were typically created for individual scholars and experts, many of them ecclesiastics or monastics, or for high-ranking elites interested in the sciences. The variety of production methods used to illustrate Palaiologan scientific manuscripts are suggestive of *ad hoc* arrangements tailored to each project's requirements, as likely determined by the recipient or patron. Among these, the picture-first mode of production stands out in particular from the usual patterns of manuscript illustration. These variable production methods required a closer degree of collaboration between scholars, scribes, and painters than is typical in other forms of Byzantine manuscript illustration.

In contrast to deluxe religious manuscripts, the imperial family appears to have played a relatively minor role in commissioning illustrations for scientific works. As a result, while the gradual decline of imperial patronage over the period had an impact on the production of deluxe religious manuscripts, those same trends do not apply to scientific manuscripts. Two particularly lavish works – the manuscripts connected to Alexios Apokaukos and Isidore of Kiev – were both produced later in the period, by which time imperial patronage had largely diverted to propping up state diplomacy. By contrast, the individual scholars and elites who used and commissioned illustrated scientific manuscripts were typically connected with monasteries or affluent patrons, or were themselves wealthy.

Finally, the novelties and the contrasting rationale for archaism in scientific illustrations complicate the idea of Palaiologan art as a product of a 'Counter-Renaissance' in several ways. Archaism often appears in scientific treatises as a way of reclaiming and preserving rare imagery. Such an attitude may have more in common with Renaissance antiquarianism and humanist textual criticism than with the archaising emulations of Middle Byzantine imagery and script seen in Palaiologan manuscripts more broadly. At the same time, scientific illustrations can also demonstrate a greater degree of novelty than is apparent in other kinds of Late Byzantine manuscript illustration. Novelty in Palaiologan scientific illustrations appears in the adaptation of imagery from other artistic traditions, the updating of earlier pictures, and in experimentation with new modes of representation, even self-representation in the case of the Nikodemos manuscript. While Orthodoxy certainly dictated the development of imagery in Byzantine religious manuscripts, it did not define scientific illustration in the same way. Nor were the sciences necessarily opposed to religious art or traditional Orthodox practice.[74] Rather, the worldviews articulated in the Nikodemos codex, the Paris *Dynameron*, and the Marciana Ptolemy point to the integration and negotiation of belief systems – the balancing of Orthodox Christianity with scientific and philosophical traditions ultimately rooted in pagan antiquity. Such projects echo attitudes and concerns commonly associated with Renaissance artists, humanists, and scientists.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 See the overview by Lowden (2004: 259–93); see also Buchthal and Belting (1978: 1–7); Nelson (1991: vol. 1: 15–19).
2 Lowden (2004: 269).

3 For this chapter, I understand 'science' to refer to natural philosophy, learning and applied technical knowledge belonging to intellectual traditions ultimately rooted in the writings and philosophical systems of classical antiquity. On Byzantine conceptions of science, see O'Meara (2017: 169–82). See also Magdalino and Mavroudi (2006: 11–37). Scientific illustrations appear in manuscripts on topics such as agriculture, alchemy, anatomy, astronomy and astrology, engineering, hunting (zoology), mathematics, medicine and pharmacology (including medical botany, mineralogy and zoology), surgery, toxicology, veterinary medicine, and occult sciences such as divination and demonology. For an overview of scientific illustration in Byzantium, see Weitzmann (1959: 5–30), and Lazaris (2017: 55–113). On scientific illustration as an autonomous art form useful for 'visual thinking', see Lazaris (2017: 113).

4 For an overview, see Maxwell (2014: 33–50). Several religious manuscripts, such as Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 54, demonstrate a high degree of coordination between scribes and illustrators.

5 Wasserstein (1967: 154).

6 Ibid.

7 Drpić (2013: 347).

8 See ibid., Wasserstein (1967: 172). See also Miljković-Pepek (1982: 491–4).

9 One fifteenth-century copy of the treatise preserves an illustration of the 'Man in the Moon'. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 2381, f. 78v; see Wasserstein (1967: 156–61).

10 Other copies of Hesiod are similarly, though less expertly, illustrated. For example, Cambridge, Trinity College Library, O.IX.27; New Haven, CT, Yale University Library, cod. 254; Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, gr. 466.

11 The miniature of the youth using a mortar appears in the lower margin on f. 33v; the tools and ploughman with plough team on f. 34r. The miniatures are connected to verses 423–45, 465–71, 571–3. See Furlan (1981, vol. 4: 25–9), Plate 4, Figures 18–21. On the illustration of tools, see Derenzini and Maccagni (1970: 66–99).

12 Furlan (2012: 82–8).

13 Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, gr. Z. 516 (coll. 904); the name appears on f. 1r: τοῦ αὐτοῦ μαΐστορος τοῦ Αστραπα ἡ Πτολεμαίου βύβλος. See Mioni (1983: 57–67); Furlan (1981, vol. 4: 30–48); Furlan (1999: 113–23); Lovino (2016: 384–98).

14 A note naming Telountas as the scribe appears on f. 208v, at the end of Aelian's *Tactica*: ἀντέγραψα πολλὰ κείμενα ἐγὼ Ἀνδρέας τελουντᾶς υἱὸς κυρίου φράγγου ἐκ τοῦ Ναυπλοίου τῆς Ῥωμανίας. Mioni (1983: 57–8).

15 Mittenhuber (2010: 106–7).

16 Ibid: 107.

17 ff. I+ 1–3, 140–1, 158–60. The inserts have different watermarks but all appear to be close in date to the copying of the manuscript, the first third of the 1300s.

18 Mioni (1983: 59). See also Furlan (1999: 113–23); and Lovino (2016: 384–98).

19 Lovino (2016: 397).

20 The identities of the figures remain a mystery. See Mioni (1983: 59–60). The female figure on the left rides an elephant and is labelled 'The Great Chatun' (ἡ μεγάλη χατὼ) while a male figure on the right is labelled Ptolemy. The top of the folio is torn, while a clumsy, if ornate, Arabic inscription reading 'sulṭān' followed by an illegible word hovers above him. While some scholars have identified 'the Great Chatun' as Sitt Hatun, wife of Mehmed II – which would require dating the frontispieces (or just the inscriptions) to the late fifteenth century – the identification is hardly secure because *khātūn* could merely be an honorific, and not a specific name. For the identification with Sitt Hatun, see Babinger (1949: 218–35). See also Redford (2004: 386–97), especially pp. 394–5. The turbaned figure on the right, now labelled Ptolemy, may have once been someone else, because the top of the folio, the location of the original label, was torn off.

21 Mittenhuber (2010: 108).

22 Alexander Jones and John Lennart Berggren claim that Planoudes created the maps from a careful reading of the text. According to their interpretation of an epigram by

Planoudes (see below), Andronikos II (r. 1282–1328) convinced Athanasios II, the Patriarch of Alexandria c.1275–c.1315, to undertake the costs for Planoudes' project. See Berggren and Jones (2000: 45–50), especially p. 49; a similar point had been made by Diller (1940: 62–7). Stückelberger (1996: 197–205) provides an alternative account. Florian Mittenhuber has effectively closed the debate by showing that an antique map tradition did in fact survive into the fourteenth century. On the problems with the maps in the Marciana Ptolemy, see Mittenhuber (2010: 101, 106).

23 On Planoudes' search for Ptolemy's *Geography*, see Stückelberger (1996: 197–205), especially p. 199.

24 For an edition of the poem with German translation and commentary, see Stückelberger (1996: 200–5).

25 On Planoudes' correspondence with artists, see Drpić (2016: 46–8).

26 For an edition of the poem with German translation and commentary, see Stückelberger (1996: 200–5) especially, p. 200, ll. 4–12:

οὐ μὲν ἐγὼ τοιοῦτον ἴδον ποτὲ πέπλον Ἀθήνης | δαίδαλα πάντα φέροντα πολύχροα καὶ κατὰ κόσμον, | οἵην τήνδ᾽ ἐνόησα Γεωγραφίην ἐρατεινήν, | εὔθετον εὐκατάτακτον ἀληθέα μάρτυσι πολλοῖς, | τοὶ πολλῶν μερόπων ἴδον ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔσχον. | καὶ δροσερὸν λιβάσιν μὲν ἰδὼν λειμῶνά τις ἤδη | εἰαρινοῖς βρίθοντα μετ᾽ ἄνθεσι τερψέμεν ὄσσε | καὶ κραδίην ἐχάρη μέγα χάρματι θαῦμα κεράσσας· | ἀλλ᾽ οὐδὲν μετόπισθεν ἐκεῖθεν ἐδρέψατο κέρδος.

27 Stückelberger (1996: 201, ll. 40–2): 'τέρμα δ᾽ ἐπισταμένως πινυτῶς τ᾽ ἐπεθήκατο τῷδε, | λισσόμενος βασιλῆα θεόν, πάλιν οὔρια γαίης Ῥωμαίων πλατύνειν ἅτ᾽ ἐνὶ προτέροις[ι] βασιλεῦσιν.'

28 On this codex, see González Manjarrés and Herrero Ingelmo (2001), as well as Collins (2000: 77–82).

29 Anton von Premerstein suggested that the codex was copied after 1406, because it reflects John Chortasmenos' work on the Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, med. gr. 1. As that manuscript is known to have been in Constantinople at the beginning of the fifteenth century, we can also assume that the Chigi codex was copied in the city. Premerstein, Wessely and Mantuani (1906: 171–2). See Gonzaléz Manjarrés and Herrero Ingelmo (2001: 46–53).

30 Mercati (1926: 93). Three other hands are associated with Latin inscriptions. Isidore's inscriptions on ff. 13–219 likely told the painter what plants to paint. Isidore's hand also appears in red titles accompanying illustrations of animals on ff. 221–233. On the sequence of production, see González Manjarrés and Herrero Ingelmo (2001: 51). See also, Premerstein et al. (1906, vol. 1: 11, 89).

31 Isidore probably studied in Constantinople in the first decade of the 1400s. In the 1420s, he was likely in the Morea. He appears to have joined the monastery of St Demetrios in Constantinople around 1430, becoming *hegoumenos* in 1433. He left Constantinople in 1434 to attend the Council at Basel. He was confirmed as the Metropolitan of Kiev in 1437, and attended the Council of Ferrara-Florence the same year. He returned to Moscow in 1441 but was quickly imprisoned for his Unionist position, only to escape back to Rome shortly thereafter. He reappears in Constantinople in 1450 and in 1452–53. He eventually settled in Italy after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. See Gill (1964: 65–78), and more recently, Philippides and Hanak (2018). In favour of a later date of ca. 1450 for Vatican Chigi F.VII.159, Isidore owned a manuscript copy of *Church Councils*, copied in two parts in 1445 and 1446 by the scribe Athanasios (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, cod. gr. 186). On f. 298v, Isidore notes that the second part of this codex was copied from an exemplar in the library of the Prodromos monastery, that is, also the location of the exemplars used for Vatican Chigi F.VII.159. See Hajdú (2012, vol. 4: 53). On Isidore's copying of manuscripts in general, see Mercati (1926), and Philippides and Hanak (2018: 250).

32 Collins (2000: 82). The unillustrated Dioscorides is Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, gr. 289. On this codex, see Touwaide (1985: 49).

33 See, for example, Kalopissi-Verti (2006: 76–97), especially pp. 77–9. See also Lowden (2004: 259–62).

34 ff. 10v, 11r; see Förstel (2015: 285–8), and Munitiz (1996: 267–80).

35 For a transcription, see Munitiz (1996: 268–74).

36 Förstel (2015: 285–8). See also Munitiz (1996: 275); Makris (2005: 157–79); Mondrain (1999: 403–18).

37 The codex measures 255 x 190 mm and contains 664 ff., 93 of which were left blank, perhaps for notes.

38 Besides frontispiece, headpiece, initials, marginal ornament and two zodiacal diagrams (ff. 654v and 656v), both with figures, the Paris *Dynameron* is otherwise unillustrated. The Annunciation scene appears on 11v. The first frontispiece (10v) may have been copied from another manuscript: The same scene can be seen in another work now in the Vatican. See Mondrain (1999: 403–18); see also Nelson (2004: 526). More recently, see Gerstel (2015: 154).

39 An inscription on f. 664r of the codex dates its completion to August 1339. The name of the recipient is recorded in the manuscript as Dēmētrios Chlōmos (δημήτριος χλωμός), physician and sinner (ἰητροῦ ἁμαρτολοῦ). The copyist records himself as 'Kosmas Kamelos, priest and exarch of the most holy city of Athens' (κοσμὰ ἱερέως τοῦ καμήλου καὶ ἐξάρχου τῆς ἁγιωτάτης πόλεως ἀθηνῶν). On the epigram, see Euangelatou-Notara (2000: 230).

40 See, for example, Kalopissi-Verti (2006: esp. 77–9). See also Lowden (2004: 259–62). On gift exchange with foreign powers, see Hilsdale (2014: 214–67), especially pp. 236–48, concerning Manuel II's gift of a manuscript with the Dionysian corpus to the Abbey of Saint-Denis.

41 Alexios Pyropoulos copied the first 20 gatherings, ff. 12–227. He also copied a twin volume without frontispieces. The twin volume is Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, gr. 2143. See Munitiz (1996: 275).

42 On the insertion of illustrations prepared separately from the text, see Buchthal (1972: 47–55).

43 Although the Nikodemos manuscript may have been produced in a similar way, its composite nature suggests it was not copied all at once but in separate stages.

44 See Nelson (1991, vol. 1: 88, 120). See also Belting (1970: 20), and Velmans (1967: 209–35), especially pp. 233–4.

45 On scribes creating ornament, see Hutter (1996: 4–22), and for figural scenes, Corrigan (1996: 61–93).

46 For an example of an extensively illustrated scientific manuscript that follows this mode of production, see the late thirteenth-century parchment codex of Euclid's *Elements* now in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 2345, ff. 6r–239v.

47 See, for example, the botanical sketches in Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, A 95 sup, s. xiv.

48 On the identification of the copyist, see Bernasconi (2010: 15–39) especially, p. 30. On the illustrations in this codex, see Marchetti (2010: 41–64).

49 Marchetti (2010: 41–64). This method, as used in scientific illustrations, appears to be distinct from 'wash drawings', which involve more modelling and rely less on pen drawing. On wash drawings, see Weitzmann (1963: 91–108). Pen and wash renderings appear in many fifteenth-century botanical codices. For examples in botanical manuscripts, see Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 2183, s. xv, and a post-Byzantine Corfiot copy of it by John Moschos, now in Salamanca, University Library, MS 2659. See Manzano (2012: 133–54), especially p. 140; see also Touwaide (1997: 439–82; 2003: 125–58); Speranzi (2010: 263–97).

50 On the sequence of production, see Mioni (1959: 349).

51 The manuscript reproduces pictures from two earlier illustrated Dioscorides: Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, med. gr. 1, s. vi, and New York, Morgan Library, MS M 652, s. ix–x, or related manuscripts. While the pictures copied from the Vienna Dioscorides

tend to follow the same order, those from the Morgan Dioscorides have been carefully selected and rearranged.

52 For example, f. 150r. Analysis with a microscope is needed to confirm that text does overlap the illustration.

53 For example, ff. 74v, 75v, 155r, 159r, 185v, 190r, 197r, 199v.

54 On the role of the scribe, see Hutter (1996: 4–22).

55 Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 1087, ff. 299v–310v, s. xiv, 315 x 230 mm. See also Guidetti and Santoni (2013).

56 The illustrations of chiropractic procedures and bandaging in Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria, 3632 may derive from the famous Nicetas codex, now in Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 74.7, s. x; see Bernabò (2010). See also Marchetti (2018).

57 See Grabar (1995: 361–4); see also Saliba and Komaroff (2008: 21).

58 For example, New York, Morgan Library, MS M 873, c.1350–75.

59 See Lowden (2004: 264). Also Lowden (2002: 74–7). On more ambivalent and even positive attitudes towards the idea of innovation in Byzantium, see Spanos (2014). On ancient Greek understandings of novelty, see Godin (2015: 19–35).

60 Mittenhuber (2010: 106–7).

61 See Anderson (2017: 107–14).

62 The miniatures' 'Western' look does not necessarily suggest the hand of a Western artist or that the illustrations were added after the codex had left Constantinople. They may rather represent a hybrid pictorial tradition evident in other codices discussed here, such as the Nikodemos codex. By the fifteenth century, many Cretan painters worked in both Byzantine and Latin traditions of painting. The bibliography on this topic is immense. See Gratziou (2012: 357–68); Constantoudaki-Kitromilides (1987: 51–3); Chatzidakis (1973). On the related question of the origins of the illustrations for two Byzantine manuscripts on horse medicine, see Lazaris (2010: 44–5, 50–3).

63 Pingree (1982: 185–92). More recently, see Anderson (2017: 108–11).

64 For repairs and overpainting in Palaiologan manuscripts more generally, see Hutter (1972: 139–48).

65 ff. 287r–289v, see Mazal (1998: vol. 2, 18).

66 f. 328r, for more, see Gastgeber (2013); also Gerstinger (1998: 25) and Brubaker (2002: 204).

67 For an illustration, see Brubaker (2002: 204), see also Marchetti (2016: 163), Figures 15a and 15b.

68 Padua, Biblioteca del Seminario Vescovile, cod. 194, f. 155r. Marchetti (2016: 163), Figures 15a and 15b, 16.

69 Xyngopoulos (1958–59: 65–9), Kalopissi-Verti (1993–94: 139–41). On this codex, see also Antōnopoulos (2007: 15–42). On the contents, see Omont (1886: 6).

70 The inscription related to the monk in the *rota fortunae* (f. 163v) reads:

Επειρ(εν) με ο τροχὸς εξέφνης κ(αὶ) καλόγερον επίησεν με | κ(αὶ) ως νέον ἠδίκησ(έν) με κὰν μὴ θέλω[ν] κὰν μὴ θέλω[ν] | Νικόδημος καλοῦμ(αι). [All of a sudden the Wheel took hold of me and made me a monk and did injustice to me, the young man, whether I wanted it or not. Nicodemus is my name.]

The transcriptions here follow Xyngopoulos and Kalopissi-Verti, and translations are by Kalopissi-Verti, (1993–94: 140).

71 The inscription above the Allegory of the Tree on f. 203v, reads,

Φυτοῦ φεραυγοῦς χρωματουργίαν βλέπων, | ἅπας θεατὴς ζωγράφον τούτου νόει, | κλεινόν τε Νικόδημον εὐκλεοῦς φύτλης, | Ξενοφῶν ἐκείνου τῶν ἐπισήμων γένει. [Looking at the picture of the light-bringing plant, every spectator would bring to mind its painter, the famous Nicodemus, of celebrated birth, a descendant of the noble lineage of Xenophon.]

The transcriptions here follow Xyngopoulos and Kalopissi-Verti, and translations are by Kalopissi-Verti (1993–94: 140). The Allegory of the Tree is derived from Barlaam and Ioasaph. See Antōnopoulos (2007: 34–5).

72 On the contents, see Omont (1886: 6).
73 Kalopissi-Verti (1993–94: 140).
74 Late Byzantine views of the sciences varied. See, for example, O'Meara (2017: 178–81).

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6   Looking beyond the city walls of Mystras

The transformation of the religious landscape of Laconia

Ludovic Bender

The south-east region of the Peloponnese, known as Laconia, preserves a great number of Byzantine chapels, churches, monasteries and hermitages. Until recently, scholarship has focused on Mystras, the Byzantine capital of the region from the mid-thirteenth century to its fall to the Ottomans in 1460.[1] While Mystras deserves such attention, it is necessary to look beyond its walls to reconsider the question of decline raised by this volume. The monuments of Laconia's countryside, no less than those of Mystras, are indicators of the social, economic, political and cultural transformations that occurred in the region. More sensitive to political and economic fluctuations, churches erected in the countryside – often by local communities – could even be considered a better marker of growth and decline than the building programmes of the rich elite of Mystras. Taking a landscape archaeology perspective rather than a more traditional art-historical approach towards this issue,[2] the present chapter aims to show the extraordinary development of the religious built landscape of Laconia in the Late Byzantine era using statistics and digital mapping.[3]

The dataset at the core of my research makes use of Byzantine and post-Byzantine churches studied by Nikolaos Drandakes and his team of archaeologists, who systematically surveyed the Mani and the Malea peninsula in the 1970s and 1980s.[4] Their work is now summarised in the form of a catalogue of painted churches that also includes monuments from the other regions of Laconia not previously surveyed.[5] Data from later studies[6] as well as information from other sources, such as inscriptions,[7] hagiographies,[8] lists of villages and tax registers from the Venetian and Ottoman periods,[9] descriptions by modern travellers[10] and historical maps,[11] have also been added to the dataset, which comprises, in its present state, 874 chapels, churches and monasteries dating from the post-iconoclastic period to 1830.

In order to study the distribution of the monuments over the Laconian territory, buildings were located and georeferenced in a GIS (ArcMap). If the general accuracy of the positioning can be considered highly satisfactory for the purpose of the present study,[12] the question of the representativeness of the data cannot be answered precisely.[13] We will admit here, for the sake of the analysis, that the destruction or replacement of churches over time happened in Laconia more or less randomly and does not significantly bias the data.

Even if a surprisingly high number of dedicatory inscriptions have been preserved in Laconian churches in comparison to other regions of the Empire,[14] the

dating of most churches relies on the stylistic and iconographic analysis of their paintings. Further research will certainly narrow down or correct certain dates, but the systematic approach of Drandakes and his collaborators, as well as the work of other scholars on Laconia, have proved reliable. The issue of the dating of construction phases is, however, more complex. Only the most elaborate buildings were studied, while the architecture of smaller churches was often dismissed. No less problematic is the fact that a number of monuments previously thought to be of the Middle Byzantine period based on architectural stylistic criteria must now be pushed into the later period, as recently demonstrated for churches of the Mani peninsula.[15] For this reason, when the dating of buildings did not seem reliable, the information was ignored or, in a few cases, corrected.[16]

For the purpose of chronological analysis, the period from 1001 to 1830 was divided into 25-year increments (30 for the last increment). While some of the dates given in the literature fall perfectly into each fractional period, many of the building or decoration phases span more than one increment.[17] To account for these cases, a proportional fractional distribution of the dating into each 25-year increment was made.[18] Finally, phases falling into time-brackets so loose that they would only bring background noise to the analysis and their graphics were excluded. For the above reasons and because the present analysis does not consider monuments before the turn of the second millennium originally included in the dataset, the final sample comprises 522 Byzantine and post-Byzantine monuments, for a total of 648 different building and decoration phases (376 Byzantine phases). With this explanation and caution in mind, we can now turn to the statistical and geographical analysis of the religious built landscape of Laconia.

Represented as a bar graphic (Figure 6.1), the data shows that the religious built landscape of Laconia evolved irregularly from the eleventh to the beginning of the
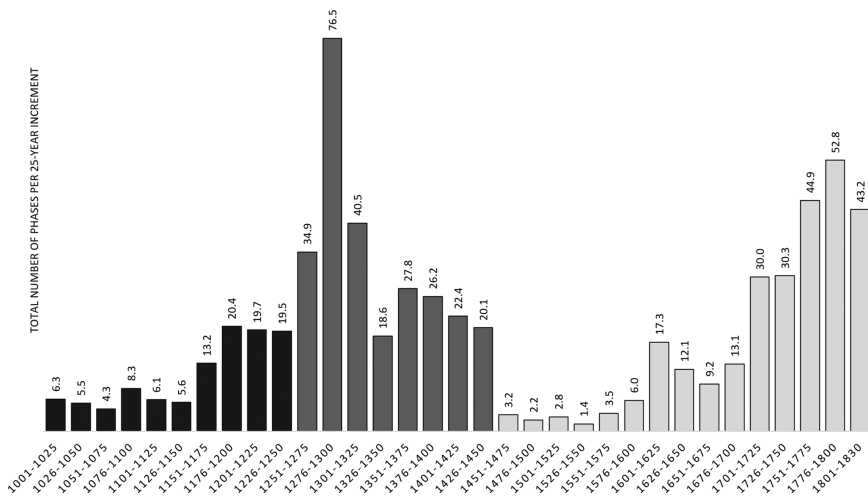
Figure 6.1 Number of building and decoration phases in Laconian chapels, churches and monasteries from the eleventh century to 1830. The black and dark grey bars correspond to the periods illustrated by the two maps of Laconia in Figures 6.2 and 6.3.

nineteenth century. Two major periods of development stand out. The first extends from the thirteenth to the mid-fifteenth century and is marked by an impressive burst in the last quarter of the thirteenth century. The second period begins in the early seventeenth century and intensified during the eighteenth century. Two much less dynamic periods can also be observed: the first from the tenth to the end of the twelfth century, and the second from the middle of the fifteenth until the end of the sixteenth century. The correlation of these periods with major historic events is very clear. Especially obvious are the effect of the Byzantine reconquest starting in 1262 after Frankish occupation of the region, and the fall of Mystras to the Ottoman Turks in 1460. Before going into more detail, however, let us now turn to the geographic distribution of the monuments over the territory.

According to the data, the religious built landscape of Laconia before the mid-thirteenth century was characterised by an uneven distribution of chapels, churches and monastic foundations (Figure 6.2). It is in the Mani peninsula where most of the monuments were concentrated. A period of church building and decoration began there at the end of the tenth century and intensified gradually.[19] In the years 1150–1250, it was clearly the most dynamic region of the south-east Peloponnese. Indeed, the Malea peninsula and the rest of Laconia appear much less active during this period, except eventually for larger settlements such as Sparta. Outside of the Mani, only a small number of village churches, hermitages and monasteries were established in the countryside before the thirteenth century.

The period of the Frankish occupation of Laconia (1205–62) gives the impression of a time of relative development, but this apparent dynamism was mostly circumscribed again to the Mani. If, in this case, the approximate dating of churches by comparison to well-dated buildings, such as Agios Mamas in Karabas (1232) and Agioi Anargyroi of Kepoula (1265),[20] may skew the picture, the very existence of a monument built during the Frankish interlude such as Agios Mamas of Karabas could be, in itself, indicative of a certain development of this region during this period, and perhaps a greater autonomy of the peninsula under the invaders. That the episcopal see of the Mani preserved its Byzantine bishop until 1222 seems to indicate the same thing.[21] In any case, the Latin conquest appears to have slowed down the development of the religious built landscape in the Mani and postponed it in other areas.

Without a doubt, the reasons for the relatively small number of religious foundations attested for the eleventh to mid-thirteenth centuries are manifold. It is likely of course that the proportion between the number of extant buildings and the total of monuments built during this period is smaller than for the following two centuries, but the potential bias of the data cannot by itself explain such an important discrepancy. Cultural, political, economic and demographic factors surely played a far more important role.[22] This question would surely require a more detailed commentary, but let us turn instead to the later centuries, more relevant to the present discussion.

During the Late Byzantine period, the religious landscape of Laconia developed at an extraordinary pace compared to other regions of the Empire (Figures 6.1 and 6.3). Neither did the rest of the Peloponnese witness such a development.
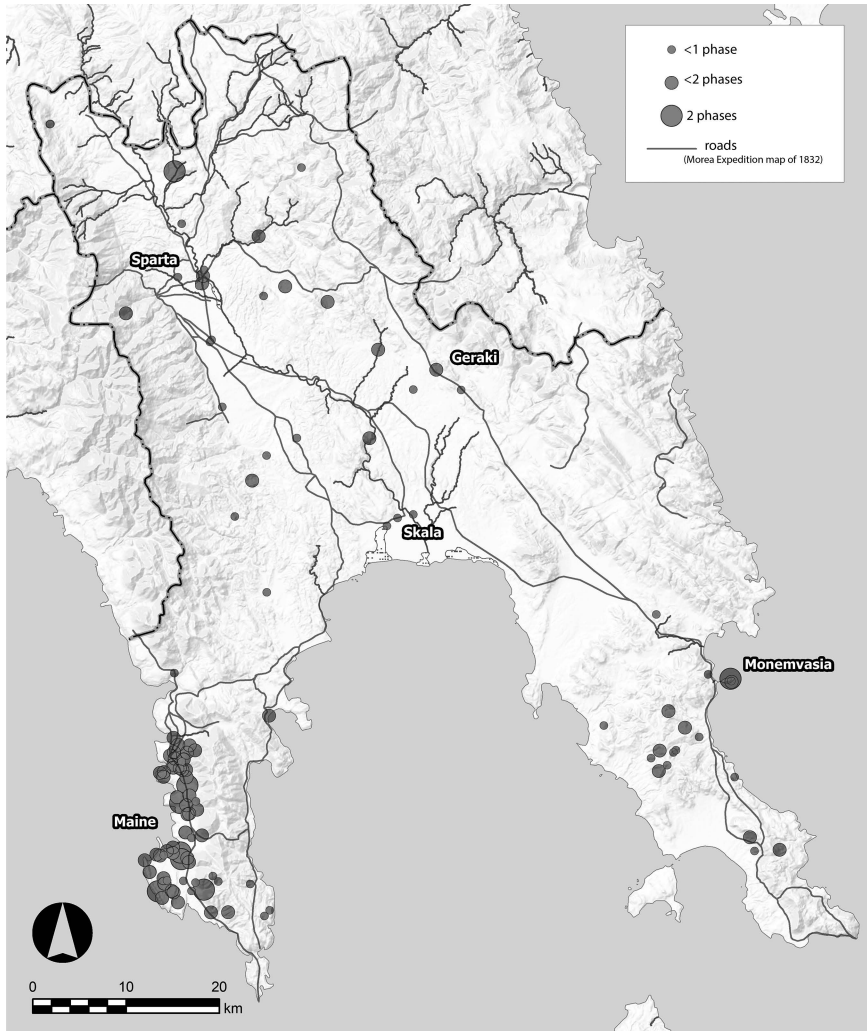
Figure 6.2 Distribution of Laconian chapels, churches and monasteries built, decorated or restored between the beginning of the eleventh century and the middle of the thirteenth century.

In Laconia, more than 40 per cent of all building and painting phases occurred between the mid-thirteenth century and 1325, while 20 per cent are concentrated in the last quarter of the thirteenth century. Mystras, where the Franks had previously built a fortress, became the new focus of Byzantine political and religious power. Churches, monasteries and even a new cathedral were built in the settlement in the early part of the reconquest.[23] The creation of the new centre produced a major shift in the landscape of the Spartan basin in terms of the circulation of people, the position of new religious foundations and even, to a certain extent, to the settlement

pattern (Figures 6.3 and 6.4). The localities and monasteries around Mystras began to thrive, as evidenced not only by the number of churches, but also by the quality of their decoration and their average size. Among the dozen Byzantine churches identified in the surroundings of Mystras, not all are well preserved or precisely dated.[24] Monuments such as the partly destroyed cross-in-square church of Agioi Theodoroi (second half of the thirteenth century) near the village of Trype, with its carefully ornamented masonry, is especially interesting (Figure 6.4, B), and seems to indicate close relationships with the capital.[25]
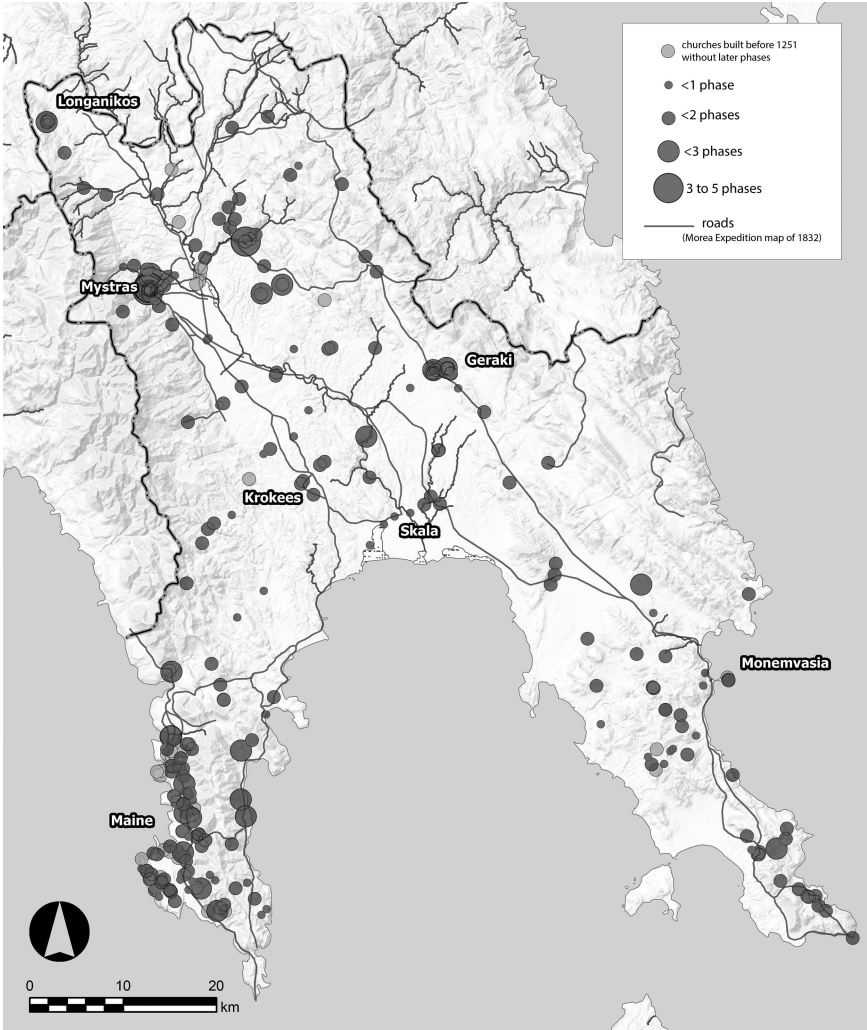
Figure 6.3 Distribution of Laconian chapels, churches and monasteries built, decorated or restored between the middle of the thirteenth century and the middle of the fifteenth century.
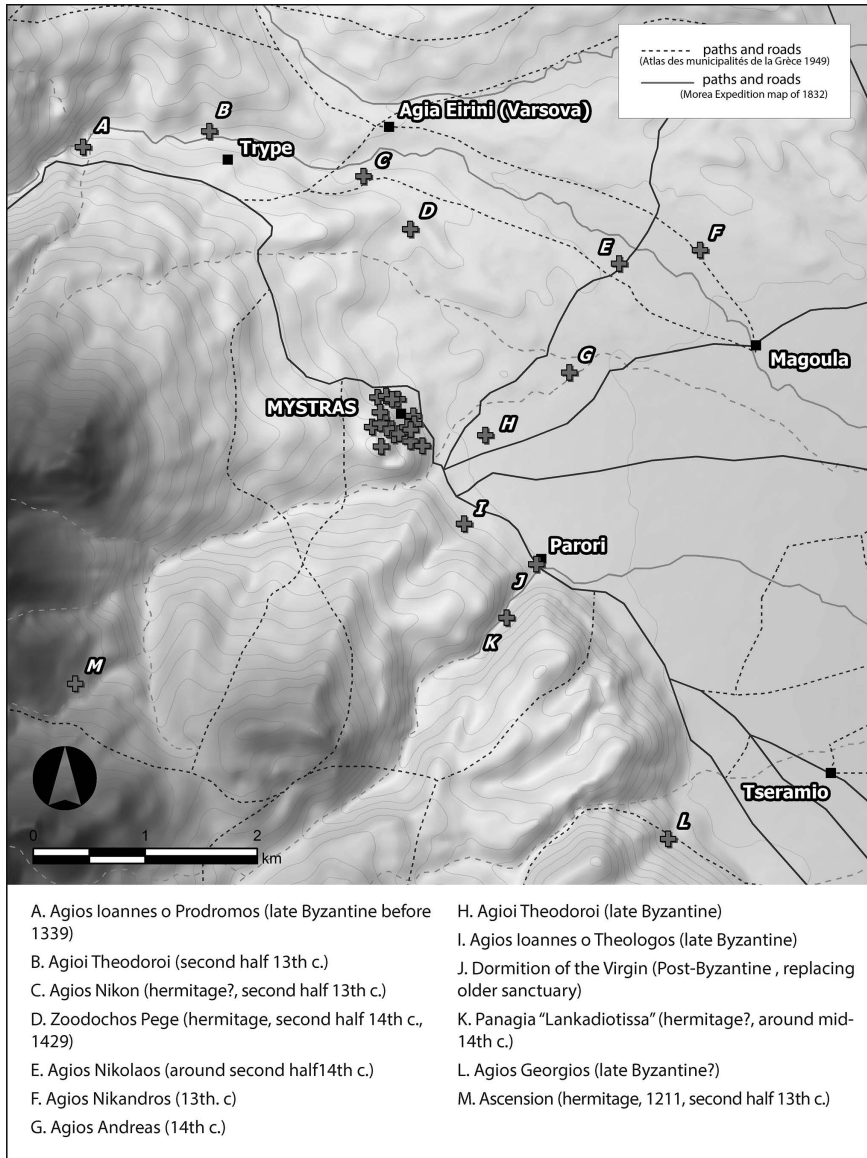
Figure 6.4 Byzantine chapels, churches, and monasteries around Mystras.

If Mystras and its surroundings especially enjoyed the effect of the political transformation of Laconia, the south-east Peloponnese as a whole also prospered (see Figure 6.3). It is worth mentioning that by 1278 the entire Laconian territory, as it is delimited today, was in Byzantine hands.[26] Secondary towns, such as Geraki,[27] as well as larger villages in the countryside, developed quickly. For Monemvasia, the prosperity of its hinterland according to the building activity

betrays the parallel development of the town itself for which the archaeological data is unsatisfactory. Literary sources reveal its new importance during the last Byzantine period and the wealth of its metropolitan see.[28]

In the first quarter of the fourteenth century (see Figure 6.1), the pace of intervention decreased abruptly and it kept decreasing over the following quarter of a century. This could be understood partly as an after-effect of the preceding boom period, but it is otherwise difficult to place this change within a historical perspective. The trend seems to reverse partly in the years 1351–1400, despite the Black Death that reached the Peloponnese in 1347,[29] but it was mainly Mystras and its direct surroundings that showed a significant development at the time. In 1348, Mystras became the capital of a region governed, from this point forward, by a despot with wider powers and closer ties to Constantinople.

In the surroundings of Mystras, monuments of the fourteenth century continue to show close links with the town itself, as is the case with the hermitage of the Zoodochos Pege outside the hamlet of Pikoulianika[30] (see Figure 6.4, D). The choice of the dedication of the hermitage links it to the development of the cult of the Zoodochos Pege, imported from Constantinople to Mystras during the fourteenth century.[31] Of a very high quality, its paintings, close in style to the decoration of the *katholikon* of the Peribleptos in Mystras, have been dated, by comparison to those of the famous monastery, around the third quarter of the fourteenth century.[32] Less tangible perhaps, but certainly meaningful, was the choice of the site which enjoyed a striking view on the hill of Mystras.[33] In the case of the *katholikon* of the small monastery of St John the Baptist near Trype[34] (see Figure 6.4, A), such a relationship with Mystras is also known from an episcopal act (1339) engraved in a column of the metropolitan church of St Demetrios, in which the monument is listed as one of the dependencies of the bishopric.[35] That last example is only one of the many properties attested by similar documents, carved on other columns of the cathedral or painted in the monastic church of the Hodegetria.[36] Other churches and monasteries, for which acts are not preserved, as well as rich families of Mystras, certainly possessed properties of their own in the vicinity of the capital.

In the south, the landscape of the Malea peninsula remained relatively dynamic in the fourteenth century, while fewer churches were erected in the Mani. In the latter peninsula, buildings of this period have been described as of a lesser quality and restoration phases as more limited, leading to the conclusion that the peninsula was economically declining.[37] While this could indeed be correct, it must also be remembered that the Mani already had a dense network of chapels, churches and monasteries. The need for new churches was certainly more limited there than elsewhere.

A breakdown of the data shows that, while the rate at which new buildings were raised in Laconia decreased during the fourteenth century, the number of smaller interventions – restorations, sometimes limited to the addition of isolated paintings, creation of annexes to pre-existing buildings – gradually increased. If the effect of the Black Death is not obvious, it may have contributed to this trend of decline. Finally, the last decades of the Byzantine Despotate of Morea did not witness a steep decline in the number of phases of intervention but a continuation of

the global slowdown that had already begun in the previous century. The activity contracted even more than before in the direction of urban centres and secondary towns, and phases of activity concerned more and more smaller building and painting interventions. This, without a doubt, is indicative of a period of decline or, at the very least, of economic and demographic stagnation that far more visibly affected communities in the countryside than elites residing in fortified towns.

To summarise, the Laconian landscape of religious foundations neither evolved linearly nor developed homogeneously over the territory. Only two historic events impacted the region as a whole. The first was the Byzantine reconquest starting in 1262, which produced the rapid creation of a dense network of religious foundations up to c.1300. The second was the Ottoman conquest and the fall of Mystras in 1460, which brought the development of the Christian landscape to almost a complete end, at least until the seventeenth century. The transformation of the built landscape seems otherwise to have followed the irregular distribution of the population over the territory and the gradual demographic development of certain areas over time. It was the Mani that first developed from the tenth century onward, but it was also the first Laconian region to see – from as early as the first quarter of the fourteenth century – a gradual decrease of building and decoration activities. While the density of the network of monuments in the region of the Spartan and Helos basins, as well as in the Malea, increased significantly only after the mid-thirteenth century when Laconia was brought to the forefront of the political and military scene, it developed well until the fifteenth century.

Whether the tremendous development of the religious built landscape in the Late Byzantine period should be understood as an impulse emanating from the higher political and religious interests better to control the region could be debated. But as dedicatory inscriptions indicate, the elite were building – or donating to – religious foundations in or around the towns in which they likely had their residence, far more often than they were erecting churches in the countryside. As we have shown, the development of Laconia during the Palaiologan era can be seen not only in the larger religious foundations of Mystras and secondary towns, but also in churches erected in rural areas. Benefiting also from the more favourable economic and political context of the early Palaiologan era in Laconia, rural communities built churches of their own. No less than the rulers of Mystras or the *archontes* residing in fortified towns, they contributed to the transformation of the landscape of Laconia during its most prosperous period since antiquity. Only in the century preceding the Greek War of Independence (1821–29) would Laconia witness again such a radical transformation of its religious built landscape.

Notes

1 For recent scholarship on Mystras, with different perspectives, see Arvanitopoulos (2004); Sinos (2009); Kourelis (2011); Papamastorakis (2012); Gerstel (2013); Kalopissi-Verti (2013).
2 The bibliography on this subject is extensive. See, among others: Ucko and Layton (1999); Knapp and Ashmore (1999); Thomas (2001); Anschuetz, Wilshusen and Scheik (2001); Branton (2009).

3 The data was collected from 2013 to 2016, during the research for my PhD (Bender 2016).

4 Drandakes (1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1982); Drandakes, Dore, Kalopissi, and Panagiotide (1980); Drandakes, Kalopissi, and Panagiotide (1981); Drandakes, Gkioles, and Konstantinide (1983); Drandakes, Dore, Kalopissi, Kepetze, and Panagiotide (1984); Drandakes, Dore, Kalopissi, and Kepetze (1984); Drandakes, Kalopissi, and Panagiotide (1986). These contributions are reprinted in Drandakes (2009). About the work of Drandakes in the Mani, see Etzeoglou (2008–09). The PhD thesis by Nagatsuka (1994) was also used for the compilation of the data, but its catalogue is largely based on Drandakes' work.

5 Drandakes (1996).

6 The main source is the Greek journal *Archaiologikon Deltion*, where new discoveries are described, but a wide range of sources was also used. I should certainly thank here the archaeologists of the 5th EAB in Sparta and inhabitants of Laconia whose information was extremely precious in compiling the data and tracking the monuments.

7 On the chrysobulls, argyrobulls or patriarcal *sigilla* concerning Laconia, see Gerstel (2013); Skagkos (2008); Pikoulas (1996); and Kalligas (1990), with references to the edited Byzantine texts.

8 The 'Laconian' saints, such as Elias the Younger († 903), Theokletos (ninth century), Theodore of Kythera († 922) and Nikon the Metanoeite († c.1000) all lived before the period considered. Few mentions of churches and monasteries can be found in their hagiographies (Bender 2016: 138–47). For a focus on Nikon's foundations, see also Armstrong (2008).

9 Only occupied monasteries are eventually found in such lists: Sauerwein (1969); Wagstaff (1977); Frangakis and Wagstaff (1987); Panagiotopoulos (1987); Komes (1995); Zarinebaf, Bennet and Davis (2005); Balta (2009); Liakopoulos (in preparation).

10 Among the travellers, William Leake (1830, 1846) proved the most useful. On Leake's travels in Laconia, see Wagstaff (1992). More generally, on travellers, see the bibliography in Bon (1969: 29–46).

11 The most interesting document for the Peloponnese is the map drawn by the French scientists of the Morea expedition. The map, of dimensions 122 × 122 cm, was first printed in six sheets at 1:200,000 in 1832 (Saïtas 2011).

12 I first used cartographic documents and modern geographic software to identify approximate locations, and later recorded exact positions in the field with a GPS handheld device (Anadigit Toponavigator 5, Google Earth and the georectified aerial images available on the website of the Hellenic Military Geographical Service (Γεωγραφική Υπηρεσία Στρατού); URL: http://web.gys.gr/GeoSearch). Of the 874 chapels, churches and monasteries inventoried, 477 were surveyed by GPS or located exactly using other means, while 82 could only be located approximately (within an estimated radius of 1 km). The other 315 monuments – most of them post-Byzantine – could not be located on maps or in the field given the limited timeframe of my research. They were simply pinned arbitrarily in their localities.

13 We can assert that Drandakes' systematic inventory, complemented by the work of other archaeologists, accurately reflects the present state of the archaeological landscape of Laconia, at least within an acceptable margin of confidence. However, it is likely that, due to the progressive destruction or replacement of churches, earlier monuments are not as well represented in the dataset as later buildings, but to quantify precisely that bias is not possible. However, we can assume that the issue has a limited effect on comparisons of brief and successive periods between them. Concerning the geographical distribution of churches, there is no reason to believe that areas of Laconia were affected very differently by the progressive destruction of monuments, except for some of the largest settlements, such as Sparta – now covered in part by the new

city – and Monemvasia – where very few Byzantine churches are still standing. See Drandakes (1996: 193); Bakourou, Skagou, and Skagos (2005).

14 Drandakes (1967); Feissel and Philippidis-Braat (1985); Kalopissi-Verti (1992); Katsaphados (2015).
15 Mexia (2011).
16 Even if the painting often followed closely, if not directly, a building's construction, the dataset more accurately reflects painted decoration than building phases, even more so, given many churches sustained multiple phases of decoration. It should also be noted that the scale of each building phase or decoration – impossible to quantify without an extensive knowledge of each building – is not considered here.
17 In order to compute the dates as given in the scientific literature, it was necessary to transform literary expressions into quantitative values. Expressions such as 'middle of the century', 'end of the century' or 'around the turn of the century' were generally transformed into 30-year periods. While arbitrary, this choice seemed to be an acceptable compromise.
18 Every building or decorative phase of a monument was given a coefficient of 1 proportionally distributed into every 25-year increment that it overlapped. For a similar method, see Striker, Russell and Russell (2008).
19 Roumeliotis and Mexia (2005: 26–7).
20 Drandakes (1996: nos 428 and 421); Kalopissi-Verti (1992: A, no. 19 and App., nos 10); Feissel and Philippidis-Braat (1985: no. 55); Katsaphados (2015: no. 1).
21 Prinzing (2002: 89, no. 22, l. 191–4). Magdalino (1977: 317–18); Bachabiolos (2014: 100–1).
22 Angold (1995); Lefort (2011); Anagnostakis (2013);
23 Millet (1910); Drandakes (1995); Chatzidakis (2005); Marinou and Sinos (2009).
24 Drandakes (1996); Bender (2016: cat. C).
25 Drandakes (1955).
26 Bon (1969: 137ss).
27 Demetrokalles and Moustopoulis (1981); Demetrokalles (2001).
28 Kalligas (1990); Kalligas (2010); Gerstel (2013).
29 Panagiotopoulos (1987: 61–8); Congourdeau (1998); Lefort (2011).
30 Drandakes (1987); Bender (2016: cat. A03).
31 Etzeoglou (2005); Teteriatnikov (2005).
32 Drandakes (1987).
33 Similar visual connections were very significant, as Bakirtzis (2006) has demonstrated for the Monastery of the Prodromos in Serres and its surrounding cave-hermitages.
34 Drandakes (1987: 87),
35 Millet (1899: 124–6); Gerstel (2013: 348–52).
36 Gerstel (2013).
37 Roumeliotis and Mexia (2005: 28).

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7 Remnants of an era

Monasteries and lay piety in Late Byzantine Sozopolis

Georgios Makris

Sozopolis in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was a major port city at the centre of an international trade network that involved Byzantine, Venetian and Genoese merchants alike. The coastal city was part of a series of harbours on the western littoral of the Black Sea, including Medeia, Zagora, Anchialos and Agathopolis, from which traders exported primarily grain to Constantinople, but also to Europe.[1] The function of Black Sea ports as economic units and their commercial links with the global market have been extensively examined elsewhere.[2]

The gradual creation of an open and free market in the eastern Mediterranean from the late thirteenth century onward, coupled with the trade privileges granted by the Byzantine authorities to Italian merchants and the increasing demand for Thracian grain, allowed some Greeks and especially Italians to buy grain, often at relatively low prices, load their ships, and sell it in Constantinople or export to Italy. Previous studies have demonstrated that the Greeks involved in maritime trade within the Black Sea area were private individuals who owned or sailed boats for their own or Genoese trading purposes.[3] The surviving documents reveal that generally the Greek merchants were members of the highest Palaiologan aristocracy and were often connected with the emperor.[4] They were primarily rich inhabitants of Constantinople but others came from the Black Sea area too. The question then arises: where did the monasteries of the Black Sea cities stand in this economic system? As we shall see below, due to their extensive estates in the rural hinterland of cities, the monastic foundations formed the major sites of grain production which fuelled the international market. It was their dependent peasants from whom Byzantine and Italian merchants bought the highly-valued wheat and grain in the first stage.

The present study focuses on the broader subject of the institutional life of Late Byzantine cities and investigates the pace of monasticism as set by urban and suburban foundations. Although recent publications have drawn new attention to the life-cycle and patronage of monasteries within great cities such as Constantinople or Thessaloniki, less work has been done regarding the institutions of the peripheral urban sites.[5] This discussion considers how monasteries transformed the cityscape of Sozopolis in the Late Byzantine period and explores the relationship between the monastic and lay worlds in an era of political insecurity, especially for what can be termed a commercial 'transit' area. Finally, it juxtaposes

the *de facto* political disunity of the eastern Mediterranean at this time with the novel and dynamic monastic landscape of Sozopolis, and further explores the city's links with the wider world.

Sozopolis provides an attractive research context in which to address these issues because it remained under solid Byzantine control throughout the period under review and, more importantly, did not witness any abdication of imperial authority until the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453.[6] As indicated above, the strong economic profile of Sozopolis that was based on local agricultural production and ties with international trade routes qualified the city as a privileged supply centre, and, as will be shown below, this may have played a part in a documented process of cultural renewal.

Sozopolis (ancient Apollonia) was built on a peninsula at the mouth of a deep gulf that enjoyed easy and direct access to the fertile plains of northern Thrace further inland. As an urban harbour, the settlement was protected on the northwest by the islet of Saint Kyrikos (modern-day Sveti Kirik), to which it was and remains connected via a breakwater. A second and larger island, Saint John Prodromos (present-day Sveti Ivan), located about 1 kilometre from the city's northern shore, formed a separate yet fully incorporated feature of Sozopolis' medieval urban topography (Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1 Panoramic view of Sozopol with Sveti Kirik in foreground and Sveti Ivan in background.

Source: Photo: Margarit Damianov.

This striking semi-insular environment, coupled with the well-documented minor rise in local sea level in the past two millennia,[7] explains why the city became from the outset an important node in the economy of the Black Sea region. In what follows, I assess the Late Byzantine monasteries' relations with other religious and lay groups to show how they came to occupy key positions in the intricate topography of Sozopolis that allowed them to remain connected to wider socio-economic networks and survive the political conditions of Palaiologan Byzantium.

There is no explicit evidence as to when the monastery dedicated to Saint John Prodromos was established on the homonymous island, also called *Megalo Nesi* (big island). The restoration of the complex is known from the verses of Manuel Philes; the *protostrator* (head of the army) Michael Glabas Tarchaneiotes is described as having restored the monastery of Prodromos which was found on the *Nesion* (island) and at the time had only six monks.[8] This rebuilding took place c.1263, most likely after Michael's successful expedition against the Bulgarians which, in addition to Sozopolis, involved the recovery of several other Black Sea ports.[9] Philes, however, does not provide any information about the material component of Michael's restoration project at Saint John. Excavations conducted by the University of Veliko Tarnovo (1985–94) have brought to light the remains of several structures on the island of Sveti Ivan. Archaeologists excavated a three-aisled Early Byzantine basilica, of which substantial parts are still visible today. Dated to the fifth or sixth century, the basilica underwent multiple phases of construction. A combined triconch and cross-in-square church was built adjacent to the basilica, most likely in the late thirteenth century (Figure 7.2).[10]

Figure 7.2 Sveti Ivan, Monastery of Saint John Prodromos, *katholikon*.

Source: Photo: Margarit Damianov.

Small finds, including fresco, glass and marble fragments, suggest that a lavish decorative programme adorned the interior. Looking at the architectural design, the incorporation of lateral apses into the northern and southern sides of the church are reminiscent of the plan employed in several *katholika* on Mount Athos from the eleventh century onward.[11] To the northwest of the second church, the excavators uncovered several subsidiary structures, including a kitchen, monastic cells and a monumental domed cistern, that reflect the monastic function of the site. The complex operated continuously from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries.

Turning to the famous *ktetor* (patron), at first sight, his actions mirror his collaboration with his wife, Maria Doukaina Komnene Branaina Palaiologina, on the restoration of the church of the Pammakaristos monastery (today Fethiye Camii) in Constantinople in the late thirteenth century.[12] Given his social standing, Michael Glabas Tarchaneiotes was certainly in a prime position to invest in monastic refounding. In the absence of a *typikon*, however, one question still arises: why did Michael renovate the monastery of Prodromos? His outstanding career offers some clues: the general maintained strong ties with the Black Sea coast not only due to his victorious campaign in the mid-thirteenth century but also while serving as *epitropeuon* (governor) of Thrace from 1282 to c.1293.[13] Michael also built and renovated a series of Thracian fortresses in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. As was the custom for lay founders, he eventually received the tonsure some time after 1304, shortly before his death, c.1305–08.

Later references to Saint John Prodromos testify to the monks' economic expansion and prominent position in the urban landscape, a phenomenon determined not only by the foundation's prestige but, more importantly, by the island's geographic proximity to the densely inhabited coastline and easy accessibility to sea routes. An argyrobull of the Emperor John VIII Palaiologos issued most likely in 1437, under his authority as despot of the cities in the Black Sea, granted the monastery of Prodromos the dependency – here called *monydrion* – of Saint Nicholas of Ptochovoethetos (helper of the poor) located on the shore near the promontory, with all its estates.[14] According to the document, Prodromos on the island of Sozopolis was also assigned an orchard in a certain village of Saint Demetrios found near Sozopolis. In return, John Palaiologos expected from the *hegoumenos* Gregory and his community, prayers and a perpetual commemoration (διηνεκὲς μνημόσυνον) for the salvation of his soul. The imperial donation demonstrates that the Prodromos house continued to be important to Constantinopolitan authorities long after its refoundation by Glabas Tarchaneiotes. The name and imperial networks of the charismatic refounder surely played a crucial role in the early life of Prodromos, but the survival of the institution well into the fifteenth century also indicates the wise management by the head of the community and an ability to attract lay donations.

Another *metochion* of Saint John Prodromos, again within the city of Sozopolis, was a parish church of Panaghia Episkepsis, which appears in a confirmatory letter issued by Patriarch Dionysios I in 1489.[15] The text states that some time during Dionysios' second tenure (1488–90), the administration of Prodromos was assigned

to the monk Gervasios. As the new *hegoumenos*, Gervasios was made responsible for the restoration of the compound which was in a dilapidated state, probably because of the Ottoman invasion. In the letter, Prodromos is said to have possessed two dependencies: a church of Saint John the Baptist inside Sozopolis (ἐντὸς τῆς Σωζοπόλεως) and that of Panaghia Episkepsis, where monks resided when doing business in the city. Since the Patriarch asked for the return of the *metochia* to the possession of the monastery, one may surmise that these estates were most likely already subordinated to the house in the Palaiologan period, if not earlier, and not after the Ottoman conquest, when the house's means were rather limited.

Although the information in the letter is relatively sparse and lies beyond the chronological limits of this study, it nevertheless reveals a reality characteristic of the Late Byzantine period; the disintegration and eventual collapse of Byzantium made favoured institutions like Prodromos all the more valuable for the economy and welfare of provincial cities.[16] Seen collectively, the series of aristocratic and imperial benefactions indicate the monastery's enduring links with the Constantinopolitan elite and resulting landed privileges. Despite the evident demise of Prodromos on occasions of immediate threat by external forces, the close ties with the patriarchate and the imperial court – which grew stronger in the fourteenth and into the fifteenth century – were deemed important even in the years immediately after the Ottoman conquest of the Empire. This phenomenon seems to fit into a broader monastic scheme characterised by the preservation of key personal contacts and institutional connections between the patriarchate and some renowned Constantinopolitan monasteries in and after 1453.[17] The non-Constantinopolitan example of Prodromos points to a similar attempt, first on behalf of the emperor, John VIII, and subsequently of the Church, to manage or renew monastic fortunes even outside Constantinople and thus reclaim authority in familiar territories – i.e. the western Black Sea coast – time and again. To be sure, the resident monks were locals and the advantages of having a resident *oikonomos* were clear: he was assigned the monastery's effective administration and communicated the need for change or support at times of crisis.[18] On the Bosphoros side, patriarchal and imperial authorities offered help in the form of donations when required, and at the same time supervised the community from a distance. Such a scheme further underscores the solid bonds of Sozopolis with Constantinople, with the former often considered the bread basket of the latter. A similar picture emerges from an investigation of the remaining monasteries in the city.

A second case is the monastery of Saints Kyrikos and Ioulitta, a foundation once located on the second islet off the coast (present-day Sveti Kirik). Here too, the presence of high-ranking Palaiologan aristocrats with their private fortunes seems to have been responsible for the welfare of the monastery. In an anonymous *sigillion* of the last quarter of the thirteenth century, preserved in *Parisinus graecus 1369*, it is prescribed that a certain *megas konostaulos* (military commander) who is also described as the *sympetheros* (father-in-law) of the emperor bequeathed to the patriarchal house (πατριαρχικὴν μονὴν) of Saints Kyrikos and Ioulitta the church of Saint George Katzinitza in Poros, a coastal locality some 5 kilometres from Pyrgos (modern-day Burgas), with all its properties, revenues and *paroikoi*.[19] The said individual apparently acquired and restored (ἀνεκτήσατο)

the church of Saint George Katzinitza before donating it. The text relates that the patron was given command of the Empire's western provinces by the emperor and had led successful campaigns with his army. With the present letter, the patriarch essentially confirmed the effect of the donation initiated by the wealthy man, who occupied one of the most distinguished military offices, that of *megas konostaulos*. Using a rather conventional vocabulary, it is noted that the generous gift was made for the salvation of the emperor's soul.

The letter highlights the special position of the patron. Taking into account the dating, it seems safe to assume that the unnamed *megas konostaulos* was actually Michael Glabas Tarchaneiotes, who, as mentioned above, served in this office in Byzantium's European provinces, including Thrace, in the last two decades of the thirteenth century.[20] The second title, that of *sympetheros*, should not cause any confusion, because, as Demetrios Kyritses has argued, too often epithets denoting a close relationship with the emperor such as *oikeios*, *sympetheros* or *gambros* may have had a symbolic rather than a literal meaning, with the aim of showing that the said person belonged to the emperor's more intimate circle of friends.[21] Turning to Sozopolis, the church of Saint George Katzinitza may have been deserted and apparently in need of renovation when Glabas Tarchaneiotes visited it, most likely during one of his expeditions. Indeed, this part of the Black Sea region was in Bulgarian hands from 1196 to 1270; Sozopolis was in fact recaptured by the army of the Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos in 1270.[22] Seen in tandem with his refounding at Prodromos, Glabas Tarchaneiotes' ability and willingness to refurbish old and failing ecclesiastical monuments in the region and then provide for grand urban institutions, all within his geographical sphere of influence, have their own dynamic that is quite different from his joint project with his wife at Theotokos Pammakaristos. In the latter case, family solidarity and, perhaps, a more pressing concern for the post-mortem fortune of his soul due to approaching death were strong motives for the act of donation.[23]

At Prodromos and Saints Kyrikos and Ioulitta, however, a sense of gratitude for the successful campaign against the Bulgarians seems to have been a major driving force. Another issue to consider is that of planning and provision for a quiet afterlife, because Michael's (or his family's) decision to be buried at the funerary chapel annex to the Pammakaristos should be explained. While the quest for salvation was certainly a highly significant motive behind all donations, Byzantine patrons were well aware of the prerequisites for the afterlife.[24] Once a person died, the remaining family members and close relatives became responsible for the burial, the maintenance of commemorative services and regular prayers; for Glabas Tarchaneiotes, it was his wife who took on these tasks once he had died.[25] His wish to be buried in Constantinople, where his family would be instrumental in keeping his memory alive, seems only reasonable, but at the same time does not underestimate the status of the successive donations at Sozopolis. Michael and his family evidently made careful provision for his burial, and an easily accessible site in the familial base, Constantinople, was the expected norm.

I would suggest that the surviving evidence contributes to the portrait of Glabas Tarchaneiotes and establishes Sozopolis as an important place in his life story. Moreover, it lays emphasis on the process of foundation and the related idea of

novelty: the commander was not a local of the Black Sea investing in an ancestral land or in a family foundation, yet he gradually cultivated links with the region, and especially Sozopolis, echoed in his philanthropic activities in relation to its ecclesiastical foundations.[26] His military campaign introduced him to the coast and he made sure to give back to its people and institutions after a successful period in the office of *megas konostaulos*. Michael's choices also reflect a care for the future, since at least the house of Saints Kyrikos and Ioulitta enjoyed patriarchal status even during his time, and thus, the prospect for prosperity and longevity under the Great Church increased. Indeed, it was only logical for an influential patron to consolidate an existing relationship between a monastery and the secular church. In the case of Saints Kyrikos and Ioulitta in particular, it is possible to imagine that the patriarchal *sigillion* confirming the ceding of the church of Katzinitza to the monastery was signed by Patriarch John XII Kosmas (1294–1303), who was born in Sozopolis.[27]

At a local level, the donations reflect Glabas Tarchaneiotes' inner concerns and a calculated plan for the monasteries themselves. For Katzinitza, the only way to ensure the protection of the restored property – through the monks' efforts for its maintenance in the long term – and the continued visibility and public outlook of his major initiative,[28] was to subject it to a wealthy and populous community – i.e. Kyrikos and Ioulitta – that could undertake such a project. As for Prodromos, the grand scale of the complex and prominent establishment on an island within, and yet outside a key urban site instead of a remote location, speaks for the secular and political implications entailed in the mechanism of donation; the principal duty of a *megas konostaulos* was to protect the Empire's citizens, and consequently the buildings' monumentality served as a reminder of Michael's bravery, gracious deeds and generosity. Despite the absence of *typika* or the formulaic wording of the acts regarding the reasons for setting up an establishment, it is the life of the patron and his course of action that offer glimpses into a complex set of motives that encompassed gratitude for heavenly protection during Michael's military activities; a standard concern for fate of the soul; an aspiration for a legacy through benefaction; and the strong personal association with the region that directed the donations towards Sozopolis.

Unlike the case of the Prodromos house, written sources indicate that the fortunes of Kyrikos and Ioulitta changed radically in the second half of the fourteenth century. By 1366, a letter of the monk Dionysios Tzamankos addressed to the patriarchate reveals that the monastery was in decay.[29] He requested permission to organise the restoration (βελτίωσις) of the monastic complex; to bring it back to its patriarchal status; and to maintain his own role as *hegoumenos* and *oikokyrios* (house manager) of the community. Dionysios also asked for the patriarchate to intervene by giving to a certain Apokaukissa exactly what had been agreed in a now-lost older correspondence, as she now had the *ktetorikon dikaion* (founder's right), following the death of her husband, who is referred to as *megas oikonomos*. Interestingly, the letter relates that upon Dionysios' death, monastic management would again become the responsibility of the patriarchate. Evidently, the *ktetorikon dikaion* was a perennial feature of a pre-existing transaction which the patriarch had expressed willingness to respect in a previous confirmatory

letter, for which 1366 is the *terminus ante quem*.[30] The ruinous condition of the house around 1366 was most likely due to the pillage and considerable destruction brought to Sozopolis in 1351–52 by a Genoese fleet, who were at war with Emperor John VI Kantakouzenos.[31]

The record suggests the important point that the widow Apokaukissa acquired the foundation of Kyrikos and Ioulitta through her parents, most likely in the form of dowry; it is specified that her husband's death qualified her as owner of the *ktetorikon dikaion*. The evidence indicates that Apokaukissa acted in an unspecified land transaction with the patriarchate, as head of household and patron (*ktetor*). Although there is no information about the woman's private story, her name hints at her privileged social status. It must be noted that a certain Euthymios Apokaukos is recorded as holding the office of *megas skeuophylax* in a document of 1351.[32] As a priest, he was entrusted with the keeping of the liturgical vessels of the Great Church.[33]

Recent work on the economic status of women in Late Byzantium has emphasised their legal right to keep, manage freely, and bequeath their dowry after their husband's death.[34] It was the Palaiologan period, an era of financial hardship and political insecurity that witnessed a higher degree of flexibility in widows' administration and legal use of dowry.[35] Related to the more elastic use of dowry goods in the later period is the well-documented involvement of urban women, especially those of the upper social classes, in large-scale building and rebuilding projects in Constantinople and other cities.[36] In addition to transactions in the form of charitable donations, the participation of women, including widows, in the economic life of the Empire is well attested in urban sites. Due to their preoccupation with activities ranging from the management of their household to investments of dowry, and, increasingly in the fourteenth century, participation in commerce, women were, as Angeliki Laiou has shown, relatively active in the urban economy.[37] This phenomenon was augmented by a number of factors, including the changes observed in the administration of dowry property coupled with the adverse political circumstances of the later period that encouraged risk taking and the existing opportunities to invest in long-distance trade.[38]

The example of Apokaukissa may partially reflect this emerging picture. The unspecified transaction between the woman and the patriarchate that the monk Dionysios mentioned in his letter was most likely some act of sale. As mentioned above, her name itself suggests that Apokaukissa was an affluent patron who, like other women of the aristocracy, was able to sell her property when and to whom she wished. Regardless of the precise type of transaction, what is significant is that the economic activity seems to have taken place at the woman's initiative. Once again, this is a result of the more active role of urban aristocratic women in the Palaiologan economy.[39] For aristocratic widows, it was their patrimonial wealth that allowed them, upon their husband's death, to exhibit economic independence, engage in ambitious enterprises and remain visible in the records.

A second patriarchal letter (ἐνταλτήριον γράμμα) of 1372 appointed a certain monk, Dionysios, as head (καθηγούμενον) of the monastery of Saints Kyrikos and Ioulitta and specified that the foundation would continue to enjoy patriarchal and

imperial status.[40] By patriarchal order, the monk Dionysios was made responsi-
ble for the administration and maintenance (σύστασις) of the monastic complex;
the expansion (αὔξησις) of its holdings; and for the care and supervision of the
monastic fathers.[41]

In June of the same year, another monk named Theophylaktos wrote to the
patriarchate and donated all of his possessions to Saints Kyrikos and Ioulitta,
perhaps before taking the tonsure.[42] His properties included a vineyard of six *mou-
zouria*, a second vineyard located next to the monastery, and all his movable prop-
erty including his sandals. The latter were to be offered to the community after
the man's death. Theophylaktos' local origin is an issue to which I shall return.
A glimpse of the post-Byzantine fortunes of Kyrikos and Ioulitta is given by a
patriarchal visit of around 1545, which confirmed its subordination to the most
powerful house of the city, Saint John Prodromos.[43]

In conclusion, it is clear that issues of preservation and management triggered
the intervention of the Church, which means that there was a patriarchal interest
(and duty) in ensuring that elite foundations did not fall into ruin.[44] Given their
parallel life-cycles, the story of the monastery of Saints Kyrikos and Ioulitta pre-
sents certain affinities with that of Prodromos. Both were sizable foundations with
an aristocratic endowment, and were controlled and overseen by the patriarch
in Constantinople. As in the case of other houses, their longevity depended on a
number of factors including the timing and type of lay benefaction, efficient man-
agement by the *hegoumenoi* and the political conditions in the city.

Assuming that Glabas Tarchaneiotes was indeed responsible for the sponsor-
ship of the Kyrikos and Ioulitta house, the starting point for both houses is simi-
lar: a round of generous patronage revived their fortunes. Yet the difference lies
in Michael's refounding of Prodromos, which in itself was far more powerful
than his granting of the church of Katzinitza to Kyrikos and Ioulitta.[45] From that
moment on, each house followed a different trajectory, with the latter falling into
ruin in 1372 despite having a wealthy woman as *ktetor*, while the former contin-
ued to accumulate estates by way of imperial or other kinds of donations. The
limited evidence clearly indicates the more local profile of Kyrikos and Ioulitta;
the pattern of patronage reveals that it was the inhabitants of Sozopolis – either
lay or monastic figures – who supported the operation of the monastery. This also
demonstrates the monastic fathers' efforts to maintain the local bonds with the
people of the city. The life-cycle of Prodromos, on the other hand, demonstrates
a considerable continuity in privileges and imperial donations enjoyed by the
community long after Tarchaneiotes' patronage, which indicates a strong network
of lay connections. After the mid-fourteenth century, exports from the Thracian
countryside decreased significantly because of the Ottoman conquests. The inse-
cure conditions affected the economic structure of the Black Sea area and most
likely disrupted the life-cyle of the more locally-dependent monastic foundations
like that of Kyrikos and Ioulitta.

In situating these foundations within a Sozopolitan context, while the absence
of corroborating evidence makes it difficult to argue that the monasteries trans-
formed the image of the city, it is safe to suggest that their development and

growth ran in parallel with, and were certainly reinforced by, the economic and political expansion of the Black Sea coastline in the late thirteenth and well into the fourteenth century, in which Sozopolis was an important node. The location of both foundations on small islands is certainly reminiscent of the Princes' Islands in Constantinople; in both cases, the insular environment allowed the carving out of an exclusively monastic landscape while the proximity ensured a straightforward accessibility to the city. The surrounding water, a valuable element for monastic founders, afforded the isolation and tranquillity deemed essential for the contemplative life.[46] Considering the commercial activity in Sozopolis, it is tempting to imagine that the two islands off the city might have been the places, alongside the main harbour, where merchants loaded their boats with grain after it had been transferred there from the great granaries of the Thracian hinterlands. Seen in this light, the monastic islands of Sozopolis differed in their function as storage and trading stops from the Princes' which were almost exclusively retreat islands for members of the Constantinopolitan upper classes.

The issue of communication is also linked with the operation of Sozopolis as a major harbour in the Palaiologan period. The fragmented written sources about monasteries, coupled with the lack of references to these sites in the commercial documents of the period, do not allow us to explain precisely the relationship of the islands with the rural countryside outside Sozopolis. The establishment of two important monasteries on the Constantinople–Black Sea trade route, literally across the harbour facilities, was a wise move that ensured profit and constant contact with a mobile world. In the end, if monasticism did not transform the city's fortunes in the Palaiologan period, it certainly engaged with the growing economy of the broader region.

Notes

1 On trade networks in the Black Sea region in the central and late Middle Ages, see Laiou (1997: 676–86); Balard (1992: 19–38); Laiou-Thomadakis (1980: 177–222).
2 Laiou (1997: 676–86), and, more recently, see Laiou (2004: 511–26).
3 See Laiou-Thomadakis (1980: 196–98.)
4 Ibid.: 190.
5 The bibliography on this subject is voluminous. See, for example Rautman (1989: 295–315); Koubena (1991: 25–32); Talbot (1993: 243–61; 2001: 329–44); Nelson (1999: 127–40).
6 On the medieval history of Sozopolis, see Soustal (1991: 454–56).
7 Baralis (2011: 103–9).
8 Miller (1855: vol. II, 96–109, 244–45).
9 For the historical developments, see Fine (1987: 170–77).
10 See Dimova (1992: 53–63); Gjuzelev and Koder (2000: 93–105). For a recent outline of the excavation results, see Kostova, Popkostantinov and Drazheva (2010: 595–99).
11 Ćurčić (2010: 609).
12 Talbot (2001: 340).
13 *PLP*, no. 27504.
14 See Sakkelion 1885: 617–19). The argyrobull has been translated by Kamperides (1993: 59–60). For John VIII Palaiologos' rulership over the Black Sea ports, see Vasile (1966: 122).
15 Sakkelion (1885: 619–21); Kamperides (1993: 79–80).

16 For a seminal study of Late Byzantine monasteries, see Bryer (1979: 219–41).
17 See, most recently, Melvani (2017: 175–82).
18 On the process of monastic management, see Morris (1995: 166–99).
19 Astruc (1953: 19–38); Darrouzès (1977: vol. I, fasc. V, 125 no. 2167).
20 *PLP*, no. 27504.
21 Kyritses (1997: 19).
22 Fine (1987: 180).
23 On motives for monastic patronage (primarily in the Middle Byzantine period), see Morris (1995: Chapter 5); Dimitropoulou (2010: 161–70).
24 Morris (1995: 124, 132–36); Mullett (2007: 7).
25 Rhoby (2009: 402–3).
26 On the issue of patrons' territorial association, see Morris (1995: 137).
27 Darrouzès (1977: vol. I, fasc. V, 125 no. 2167 n. 1).
28 On the key relationship of the monastic patron vis-à-vis the viewer, see Dimitropoulou (2010: 165–66).
29 Miklosich and Müller (1860: 487–88 no. 227); Darrouzès (1977: vol. I, fasc. V, 434–35 no. 2520). It is noteworthy that the copy of an alleged chrysobull of Emperor John V Palaiologos of 1363 with which the monastery of Saints Kyrikos and Ioulitta was absorbed by the house of Prodromos is not genuine. On this issue, see Darrouzès (1977: vol. I, fasc. V, 435 no. 2520 n. 2).
30 For information on the patriarchal letter to Apokaukissa, see Darrouzès (1977: vol. I, fasc. V, 425 no. 2508). For the *ktetorikon dikaion*, see Thomas (1987: 253, 260, 267).
31 Schopen and Bekker (1829–55: vol. I, 193). For the historical developments that led to this event, see Nicol (1972: 243).
32 Darrouzès (1977: vol. I, fasc. V, 425 no. 2508 n. 1).
33 *ODB* III: (1909–10).
34 See Laiou (1981: 236–41; 1998: 129–60); Macrides (1992: 89–98). On dowry rights through the lens of monastic archives, see Talbot (2012: 995–1014), at pp. 1002–4. See also the most recent discussions in Gerstel and Kalopissi-Verti (2014: 195–211), especially pp. 196–8; Stathakopoulos (2014: 383–97), especially p. 386 (both with earlier bibliography).
35 Gerstel and Kalopissi-Verti (2014: 197).
36 Talbot (2001); Kidonopoulos (1994).
37 Laiou (1981: 243–49).
38 Laiou (2001: 261–73).
39 This phenomenon was first noted by. Laiou (1981: 251).
40 Miklosich and Müller (1860: 366–67 no. 165); Darrouzès (1977: vol. I, fasc. V, 545 no. 2651).
41 On the responsibilities of Palaiologan lay patrons in a Constantinopolitan context, see Mitsiou (2013: 161–74).
42 Miklosich and Müller (1860: 152 no. 421).
43 Papadopoulos-Kerameus (1900: 661–95); Kamberides (1993: 101–3).
44 Mullett (2007: 376) observed a similar pattern in Komnenian Constantinople.
45 On the dynamics and meaning of refoundation, see ibid.: 366–78.
46 On the relationship between monastic sites and water, see Talbot (2007: 43–62).

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8 Palaiologan art from regional Crete

Artistic decline or social progress?

Angeliki Lymberopoulou

> If he [Vasari] really knew the nature of the Greek style of which he speaks, he would deal with it differently in what he says. He compares it with Giotto, but what Giotto did is simple in comparison, because the Greek style is full of ingenious difficulties.

This is what Domenikos Theotokopoulos, the world-famous artist better known as El Greco (1541–1614), noted in his own hand, in Castillian, in the margin of his copy of Vasari's *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, which he owned in the second, enlarged edition, published in 1568.[1] This is an assessment by an artist who, unlike Vasari, had in-depth knowledge of both Byzantine and Renaissance art; by an artist who, in the same copy of Vasari, in the life of Tintoretto, stated that the latter's *Crucifixion* in the Scuola Grande di San Rocco, completed in 1565, was 'the best painting in the world today'.[2]

Unfortunately for Byzantine art, it was not El Greco's opinion that prevailed – and it would have been really helpful had the Cretan explained what he meant by his comment. Vasari's opinion that the contemporary Greek (Byzantine) style is 'rough' and 'rude', in short, 'bad', gave it a disadvantage: it always fell short when compared to the masterpieces that 'good' art, deriving from ancient Greece and Rome revived by the Italian Renaissance, had to offer.[3]

Vasari, however, was not the only author to put the shackles of ugliness and inferior quality on Byzantine art. In the late eighteenth century, Edward Gibbon (1737–94) compiled a monumental work, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, in no fewer than six books published between 1776 and 1789. In his first book, in Chapters 15 and 16, Gibbon considered the role of Christianity in the process of the decline of the Roman Empire,[4] while in Chapter 48, the introduction to the fifth book, he dealt a devastating blow against the Byzantine Empire, the subjects of which

> assume and dishonour the name of both Greek and Romans, present a dead uniformity of abject vices, which are neither softened by the weakness of humanity, nor animated by the vigour of memorable crimes … Nor are the defects of the subject compensated by the skill and variety of the painters.[5]

Gibbon's landmark publication painted an overall ugly and negative picture of the Byzantine Empire – with its art being the collateral damage in a process of decline.

With El Greco long dead by the time Gibbon's works were circulated and read, it was Sir Steven Runciman (1903–2000) who came to the defence of the Empire and Byzantine art in a paper published in *Daedalus* in 1976. Sir Steven's article was short, yet punchy, placing Gibbon's disdain for the Empire within the latter's contemporary social perspective. Sir Steven, like El Greco in relation to Vasari, concluded: 'But, for all his [i.e. Gibbon's] greatness as a historian, the spirit of Byzantium eluded him.'[6] Sir Steven underlined that Gibbon had no interest in Byzantine art and, in fact (again like Vasari), 'never saw Byzantine art in its homelands'.[7]

The two most dismissive opinions to have been cast upon Byzantine art and history have come from (Western European) men who did not know, understand or engage with it on a deeper level. The two counter-statements came from people who knew, understood and had engaged with it. It is not a coincidence that from the 1970s onwards there is a marked rise in interest in the Byzantine Empire, its art and its interaction with the West. Manolis Chatzidakis' crucial publications on the Cretan post-Byzantine icons and their artistic dialogue with the West date from that period.[8] They reflect a tendency to ascertain the contribution of Byzantine culture in the development of European civilisation.[9]

Taking a specialist's look at Byzantine artefacts and trying to place and study them within their own parameters, rather than measuring them with yardsticks against which they always fall short (for example, that of the Renaissance) was a positive development, but one not without a catch.

The eleven-centuries-long (not including the post-Byzantine era) Byzantine artistic production is enormously wide-ranging: from fabulously expensive and glamorous – a class of artefacts that have caused Byzantine artistic production to be described with some frequency as 'exotic' – to inexpensive and of 'popular taste'. This inevitably led to the creation of a hierarchy within Byzantine art itself: while Vasari's unfavourable criticism of Byzantine art set the scene where its artefacts are invariably wanting compared to post-medieval Western European achievements, at the same time Byzantine scholarship created an internal artistic classification reflecting 'the good, the bad and the ugly'. The top of the list is occupied by lavish manuscripts, mostly executed in Constantinople.[10] Monumental mosaic decorations, dated primarily to the Middle Byzantine period, and refined contemporary ivories are also held in high esteem.[11] Joining them at the top are the grandiose architectural achievements serving as the backdrop for magnificent ceremonies. At the peak of these is Hagia Sophia, with its dome, which rendered the unsuspecting viewer who entered it for the first time speechless, as is attested by the Russian delegation at Constantinople at the end of the tenth century, who were 'at a loss how to describe' their experience.[12] Even Gibbon could not help but express admiration for its size and magnificence.[13] From the period that is the focus of the present volume, the Palaiologan era, with its fresco decoration, predominantly located in major urban centres, is also considered exemplary. Indeed, Cyril Mango has pointed out the immense contribution of the Palaiologan era to painting, 'at least about 1325' (as he put it) located in key cities of the Empire,[14]

a point indirectly supported by Thalia Gouma-Peterson, who in her chapter in the volume *The Twilight of Byzantium*, published in 1991, mentioned that the decade 1311 to 1321 has been called the most productive of the reign of Andronikos II (1282–1328), a period richest in monuments.[15]

Inevitably, however, Palaiologan art is presented in a context of decline. The second edition of the *Oxford English Reference Dictionary* describes 'decline' as: 'deterioration; loss of strength or vigour; decrease;.[16] This qualification certainly applies to the general social, economic and political position of the Empire in the Palaiologan era, which starts with the recapture of Constantinople from the Latins in 1261 and ends with its fall to the Ottomans in 1453. The general picture of the time we have is rather bleak: a territorially diminished Empire, a mere shadow of its former self, its remaining lands torn apart by civil war and religious strife, a crippled state relying on a devalued currency and on charity, not being able to meet its own needs.[17] The story of the Emperor John VI who, in 1346, could not afford the restoration of Hagia Sophia's collapsed great eastern arch and part of the dome, but had to seek the required funds from the Rus and the inhabitants of his capital presents the situation better than any lengthy description.[18] Seen against this dark background, it is unsurprising that, at best, Palaiologan art is seen as a sparkling exception that proves the rule, or, as Slobodan Ćurčić has put it, 'the political and economic decline of the Empire was not neatly paralleled by a similar cultural decline'.[19] For others, the sense of deterioration appears to have rubbed off even on the art. Thus David Talbot Rice closes his 1959 book, *The Art of Byzantium*, with 'the story ends with a decline',[20] while the Introduction of the *Handbook of the Byzantine Collection* at Dumbarton Oaks, published in 1967, states 'the qualities which produced these final pieces of Byzantine art, also spelled its decline'.[21] Doula Mouriki, discussing the 1428 Pantanassa frescoes in Mystras, in the aforementioned volume, *The Twilight of Byzantium*, concluded: 'I believe that these [i.e. Pantanassa] frescoes already present an end in the evolution of Byzantine painting, since they no longer function as images carrying with them the eternal truths of Orthodoxy.'[22]

The sense of decline becomes even stronger when we consider not monumental painting in major cities, but so-called provincial and/or regional art. In her paper, 'Stylistic Trends in Monumental Painting of Greece at the Beginning of the Fourteenth Century', Doula Mouriki again examines Palaiologan monuments from Thessaloniki, Mystras, Attica, Euboea, Crete and Chios. The last four (Attica, Euboea, Crete and Chios) are put together in a section entitled 'The Rest of Greece',[23] in itself suggesting a division that unsurprisingly favours the main artistic centres over the regions:

Finally, it is important to realize that the rest of the monumental painting in Greece which falls within the chronological framework of the Symposium [i.e. early fourteenth century] is of a generally *low level*. *The absence of wealthy donors is also evident*. An obvious characteristic of these decorations is the markedly *popular taste*, revealed both in the adherence to stylistic tendencies of the past and in a *considerable weakening of the classical tradition*. Western influences may be detected now and then. Nevertheless the *essence* of the [Byzantine] *style remains unaffected*. Whenever elements of a more progressive approach appear, these are usually related to the current style of the Macedonian frescoes. Painting in *provincial* Greece is as yet

incompletely known. When more material is available and published, its relation to the artistic production of the *important cultural centres* of the period will be defined more satisfactorily.[24]

[Mouriki 1974; my italics]

My aim here is not to contradict the conclusions drawn by the late Doula Mouriki; in the first instance, her paper was written back in 1974 when scholarship was dominated by notions of artistic purity as characteristics of hierarchical superiority, notions that our present multi-cultural society has challenged by providing its own example as a starting point. My aim is rather to put these notions within a perspective, to re-assess and reinterpret them by introducing new viewpoints and exploring new angles; in short, and following the theme of this present volume, to reconsider them. This aim would certainly benefit from the extensive work that has been carried out in the last quarter of a century in exploring the art of 'provincial' Greece, which, as Mouriki pointed out at the time she wrote her paper, was 'incompletely known'. I would like to underline that I am using 'provincial' here as geographical signifier (i.e. located in the provinces) and not as an indicator of (relegated) quality.

Analysing Mouriki's aforementioned paragraph, a number of issues that potentially contributed to describing Palaiologan provincial art as an example of 'decline' can be identified. The absence of wealthy donors, a popular taste and traditionalism are all cited as characteristics of low artistic quality. This suggests that 'high' level/quality art is directly tied to financial affluence and sophistication, of which Palaiologan (regional) society did not have enough. Using these criteria as qualification points, the Chora monastery counts as the final flourishing of Byzantine artistic expression – it is in fact regarded as the epitome of Palaiologan art.[25] And if the Chora monastery is set as the yardstick for measuring Palaiologan art, most other art produced during the period runs a great risk of being found wanting and falling short of the *parekklesion*'s artistic display, even by the present day's far more flexible and inclusive standards. The verdict delivered on Palaiologan art by the aforementioned *Handbook of the Byzantine Collection* at Dumbarton Oaks was that 'Ultimately it was suffocated and shrivelled under the weight of its own consciously nurtured traditions.'[26]

Nevertheless, even this brief dipping into scholarly opinions on Palaiologan art does not fail to underline its adherence to various multi-faceted traditions and therefore its diversity[27] – although, surprisingly, they count as negative traits. Hence while the *Handbook of the Byzantine Collection* suggests, as mentioned above, that the weight of traditions inherited in Palaiologan art contributed to its downfall, Mouriki, when discussing the Pantanassa frescoes at Mystras, noted that they do not entail the eternal truths of Orthodoxy and as a consequence they mark the end of the evolution of Byzantine painting.[28]

At this point, it may be necessary to highlight that one major argument for this perceived 'failure' of provincial Palaiologan art is based on stylistic comparisons. 'Style' as a tool for examining artefacts has its shortcomings, its pitfalls and its dangers; for example, based exclusively on stylistic comparisons, no art historian of sound mind would have attributed to the same hand the works produced by El Greco at the beginning and at the end of his career.[29] At the same time, it provides much needed standards to define timeframes, in particular within Byzantine art. Connoisseurship, in the form of evaluation of craftsmanship and the related

determination of price tags, will always retain its significance in the study of art. However, in order to have the full picture, it is imperative to look at the wider socio-economic context that produced the specific artefacts. In other words, it is necessary to take into account the financial and intellectual means available to each social unit (where 'unit' can be either the state or a religious establishment or a wealthy individual or a whole community, etc.) that commissioned them. And once these important factors are established within the comparative consideration, it would be more appropriate to talk not about 'decline', but rather about 'diversity', as in 'variety' and of 'different kind' based on the definition provided by the *Oxford English Reference Dictionary*.[30] A review of the extensive secondary literature on the Palaiologan art would probably support this suggestion because of the variety of scholarly opinions available on evaluating primarily its monumental art against a backdrop of socio-cultural changes. In cases where the donors belong to provincial lower working classes or are whole village communities that have come together as sponsors, it would be appropriate to also assess elements of social progress in such and similar discussions.

Putting theories to the test

As is well known to all Byzantinists – and as mentioned above – the Palaiologan era lasted from 1261 until 1453. Its artistic production had a plethora of geographical pockets, from the main urban centres of the diminutive Empire (Constantinople, Thesssaloniki, Mystras) to places that had passed to Latin rule following the fall of Constantinople to the armies of the Fourth Crusade in 1204. While these places were never recovered by the dying Empire, most of them managed nevertheless to maintain their artistic ties with the recaptured capital until its fall to the Ottomans. One such area was the island of Crete. The Venetians recognised its beneficial strategic placement for their maritime trade interests in the Mediterranean and ensured that the island became part of their dominion (*Stato da Mar*). Their rule lasted from 1211 to 1669.[31] During this time, Crete emerged as Venice's most precious possession and at the same time became the main site of the continuation of Byzantine art beyond the end of the Empire.[32] Hence the cultural story of the Venetian period on the island is a tale of two halves, one of the pre-1453 era and another of the post-1453 period.[33] Venetian Crete's rich artistic creation arose in a climate of cross-cultural interactions benefiting from thriving trade and social mobility already attested by the early fourteenth century.[34] It offers a perfect example for a reconsideration of regional/provincial Palaiologan art, with a more holistic view on the circumstances of its production.

Evidence suggests that pre-1453 Orthodox Cretans continued to regard the Palaiologoi as the nominal rulers of their island. Eleven inscriptions found in Cretan churches dated between 1291 and 1446 make explicit reference to the reign of the relevant Palaiologan emperors in Constantinople.[35] Numerically, the Venetians were always a minority on the island.[36] The Catholic Venetians tried to take measures against Orthodoxy, but these remained largely unsuccessful and certainly did not have any bearing on the Byzantine 'character' of the monumental art on the island.[37] At the same time, a number of examples also bear witness to the various levels of the inevitable social interaction between the two sets of inhabitants. For example, in the

Church of Saint Pelagia in the village of Ano Viannos, Herakleion (Viannos area) (Figure 8.1), dated 1360, on the lower, east-end part of the north wall, Saint Bartholomew is depicted with his flayed skin over his shoulders, a representation that follows the Catholic narrative of his martyrdom, since, according to the Orthodox Church, he was crucified.[38] In this instance, however, he is joined by the very popular saint on Crete, Mamas,[39] and by an Orthodox monastic saint, Anthony (Figure 8.2).

Figure 8.1 Map of Crete.

Source: © Angeliki Lymberopoulou and Rembrandt Duits.

Figure 8.2 Church of Saint Pelagia, Ano Viannos, Herakleion (Viannos area), Crete, 1360, wall painting detail from the north wall, Saints Bartholomew, Mamas and Anthony.

Source: Photo: author.

A further telling example that transcends visual testimony is the identification of a usurer punished in hell in the Church of Saint Zosimas, in the village of Achladiakes in Chania (Selino area), dated to the fourteenth century, by the word 'zouraris' (ζουράρης) (Figure 8.3).[40] The word reflects phonetically the Latin/ Venetian word for usurer, reproduced visually in Greek letters on the wall painting. This indicates a conscious choice not to identify this particular sinner with the equivalent Greek word (τοκογλύφος) but rather to reproduce the Italian word (sound) transliterated in Greek.[41] Another aspect of cultural interaction can be detected in the scenes depicting Herod's feast and the Last Supper in the Church of the Panagia Kera at Kritsa, dated to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, where contemporary Venetian glasses are part of the table layout, in an otherwise 'pure' Byzantine iconography.[42]

Figure 8.3 Church of Saint Zosimas, Achladiakes, Chania (Selino area), Crete, fourteenth century, wall painting, detail from the west wall, a sinner identified as the usurer.

Source: Photo: author.

The movement of artists between Constantinople and Candia in both directions is well attested in the sources and is reflected in some of the monumental art of the island.[43] For example, it is clear that the stunning wall paintings of the monastery of Saint Phanourios in Valsamonero (Kainourgio area), to the south of Herakleion, dated 1406/7–14, are 'influenced by Constantinopolitan elegance' as Charles Delvoye put it in 1967 in his book *L'Art Byzantin*.[44] Of equally noticeable quality are the wall paintings of the church dedicated to Saints Constantine and Helena in the village of Avdou (Pediada area), just over 30 km outside Herakleion. The inscription that dates the church to 1445 also mentions the names of Manouel and Ioannis Phokas, painters whose art also betrays Constantinopolitan influences.[45] Furthermore, its iconographic programme includes scenes from the life of Saint Constantine, not common in Byzantine art, but also found in other churches on the island.[46] This highlights the importance that the first Byzantine emperor and saint held for Orthodox Cretans, as attested in the iconography of other, remotely situated, churches.[47] Another monument of noticeable quality is located in the village of Axos in Rethymnon, dated to the late fourteenth century.[48] Stylistic comparisons carried out between these monuments and several others located in the south-west part of the island strongly suggest that they were not done by the same artists. Without disregarding the shortfalls of stylistic comparisons mentioned above, nevertheless in this case, style presents an unavoidable tool, much needed in order to assess the level of artistic dexterity and knowledge of contemporary stylistic trends as presented in monuments dating from roughly the same period but geographically scattered in various places in regional Crete.

Beyond our admiration for the high standard of artistic quality – and innovation – situated within the equally magnificent Cretan landscape, the information that these monuments convey suggests that most of them are situated close to the capital Candia and the area (the present-day prefecture) around it.[49] Such places were attractive to painters, and patrons were in an advantageous position to lure the best among them to their territories for a couple of months. But what about the art in the remote places of the island? Crete has over 800 churches that are dated to the period of Venetian rule;[50] it is highly likely that, from a stylistic point of view, Mouriki, writing back in 1974 would have described the majority of them as 'low [or of lower] level', regardless of the fact that some of them also present us with challenging iconography.[51] Their importance lies predominantly in the rich insight they offer into the society that created them and its economic status, as well as the development of cross-cultural interaction in places far removed from the main centres on the north coast.

The former province of Selino in the south-west corner of Crete in the prefecture of Chania is one of the furthest points from the hub of the capital Candia (see Figure 8.1). Yet this area is one of the most interesting in the Venetian dominion of Crete: here we find the greatest number of small Orthodox churches dating from the Palaiologan era and a number of unique artistic elements.[52]

Selino is the home of the donors of the church of the Archangel Michael at Kavalariana, a village located a couple of kilometres away from Plemeniana, where one of the churches mentioning the name of a Palaiologan emperor is situated.[53] By contrast, in the church of the Archangel Michael, the donors in the dedicatory inscription are praising the Venetians and their rule.[54] It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss and assess the phrasing of this unique inscription.[55] Here, I would like to explore a comparison between the donors of the Kavalariana church, so far removed from a main urban and artistic centre, and the high-ranking officer of his time, Theodore Metochites (c.1269–1332), probably the most famous patron of the Palaiologan era (Figures 8.4a, 8.4b and 8.5). Is it justified to have as our starting process the concept of decline when assessing Palaiologan art situated in the provinces?

Chronologically, the two monuments are relatively close: as we know the Chora *parekklesion* was ready and functioning by Christmas 1321,[56] while the church of the Archangel Michael at Kavalariana is dated by inscription 1327/28.[57] Thus we have two contemporary monuments which, at a first glance, could not be more different.

The Chora monastery is currently a world-famous monument, located in the former capital of the Byzantine Empire, Constantinople, the result of the aristocratic patronage of the scholar, and most important statesman of the reign of Andronikos II (1282–1328), Theodore Metochites.[58] Its frescoes and mosaics are considered to be of the highest quality – indeed (as mentioned above), the Chora monastery is regarded as the epitome of the Palaiologan style in its most lavish expression. It is obvious that its patron did not spare any expense.

In contrast, the church of the Archangel Michael at Kavalariana is situated in a remote corner of Crete – even today it takes some effort to locate it (see Figure 8.1). It is tiny compared to the Chora *parekklesion*, which is not known for its grandiose dimensions.[59] Its wall paintings are not considered among the best that Cretan art dated to the first half of the fourteenth century has to offer; nevertheless, certain scholars believe that the painter of the church was one of the most prolific fourteenth-century Cretan artists, Ioannis Pagomenos, on the basis of the fact that the first name of the painter, Ioannis, is mentioned in the Kavalariana dedicatory inscription.[60] Three families, those of Theotokis Kotzis, Manuel Melisourgos and Niketas Sideris, joined forces to produce it.[61]

At this point it may be useful to apply El Greco's approach to Vasari's verdict (mentioned at the beginning of this chapter) and try to see beyond the surface, on the basis that these two monuments have a surprising number of comparable aspects in common. Both monuments were in all likelihood the intended burial places of their patrons. Metochites, in his *Address to the Archistrategos* (Logos 3), begged the Archangel Michael to intercede on his behalf on the day of the Last Judgement, since the Archangel is responsible for weighing the souls and assessing their deeds.[62] The representation of the Last Judgement and the prominent placement of the impressive Anastasis in the *parekklesion* seem to be related to this request.[63] At Kavalariana, the connection with the Archangel Michael is suggested by the dedication of the church. None of the principal named male donors in the inscription is called Michael,[64] so the Archangel would not have

Figure 8.4a Painter Ioannis, church of the Archangel Michael, Kavalariana, Chania (Selino area), Crete, 1327/28, wall paintings, detail with the portraits of the donors depicted on the blind arch of the north wall.

Source: Photo: author.
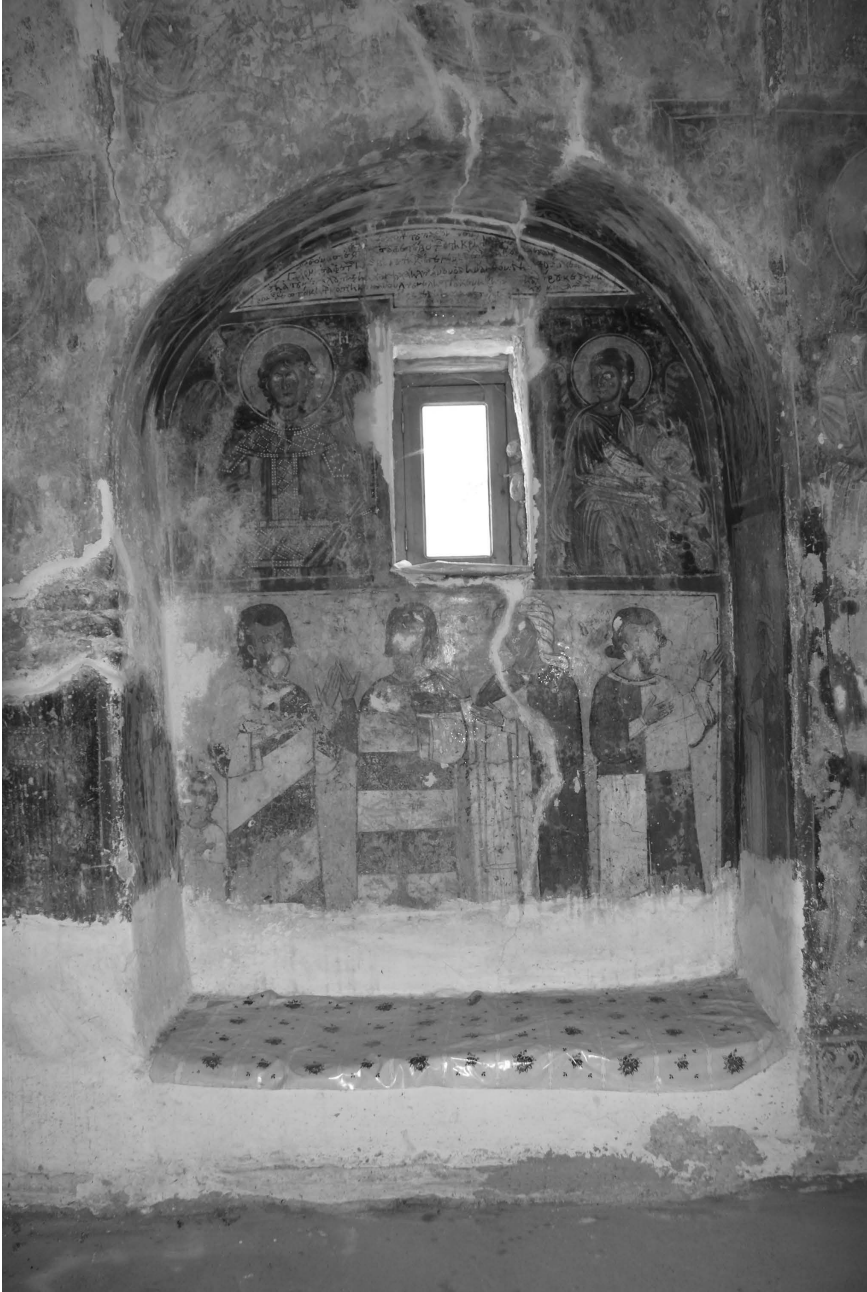
Figure 8.4b Painter Ioannis, church of the Archangel Michael, Kavalariana, Chania (Selino area), Crete, 1327/28, wall paintings, detail with the portraits of the donors depicted on the blind arch of the south wall.

Source: Photo: author.

been considered as their patron saint – that is, the saint after whom they had been named; this would suggest that the donors collectively dedicated their church to Michael in anticipation of the Archangel's favourable judgement when the time came to deliver their souls.[65]

Both sets of donors are secular (i.e. not ecclesiastical) figures and are depicted prominently within their sponsored edifice. The all-too-familiar figure of Metochites is depicted kneeling at the right hand of Christ, to whom he has dedicated the *parekklesion*, visually conveyed by the figure of the donor presenting a model of the building to Christ. Equally well known is his contemporary fashionable attire with the glamorous *skiadion* and *kabbadion* (see Figure 8.5).[66]

The much less famous Kavalariana donors present a rather intriguing gathering. Similar to Metochites, the wardrobe of the male donors mostly reflects their knowledge of contemporary fashion, but Western in their case, known as 'particoloured' or 'mi-partie' – basically, garments that have two alternating colours creating a relatively symmetrical pattern (the ladies are dressed in mainstream Byzantine attire).[67] As an ensemble, they constitute a second *unicum* in the Palaiologan art of Crete (the first is their praise of the Venetians as 'great' and 'masters' in the dedicatory inscription of their sponsored edifice):[68] they have

Figure 8.5 Church of the Chora, Constantinople, 1321, mosaic (side-chapel) the donor, Theodore Metochites, presenting his sponsored church to Christ.

Source: Photo: Photographic Collection, Warburg Institute.

placed themselves in the middle of the religious iconographic programme of their church, in two sets of seven facing each other as if they were occupying the lateral wings of a triptych (see Figures 8.4a and 8.4b). These mortals join the saintly figures and events in a cycle that, based on our current knowledge from the art on the island, remains without parallel. They are not depicted offering a model of the church to Michael (that is to the patron saint), a far more traditional formula employed by Metochites as well as by other Cretan donors.[69] Instead, they are shown in supplication to the Archangel, whose help and mercy they are seeking, which they hope to receive in the Last Judgement. They are situated in the lowest of the three zones that form the hierarchical system of a Byzantine church.[70] As such, they are surrounded by an entourage of saints who reside in Paradise and are customarily placed in this level within the Byzantine monumental iconographic programme. At the same time they are also level with the living congregation of the church. This is an ambiguous statement: are they already in Paradise, in the company of saints, praying for the souls of the faithful watching them in eternity, or are they an eternal part of the congregation praying for the salvation of their souls at the moment of judgement?

The sophisticated subtlety of the Kavalariana donors is rather clever, especially when compared to convictions expressed by other ambitious Cretan sponsors. For example, the donors in the Church of Christ the Saviour at Akoumia in Rethymon (Hagios Vasileios area), dated 1389, portrayed themselves in Paradise, indicated by the surrounding vegetation.[71] Georgios (George) Kladas in the church of Saint John the Evangelist at Margarites, also in Rethymnon (Mylopotamos area), dated 1383, was so sure of his saintly status in the afterlife that he replaced Saint John the Baptist with his own portrait in the Church's *Deësis*.[72] The male donor of the Church of Saint John the Baptist in Axos, another church situated in Rethymnon, dated to the end of the fourteenth century, actually depicted himself entering the gates of Paradise (Figure 8.6).[73]

The Kavalariana donors avoid such explicit statements through the subtlety of their suggestion. But perhaps even that sophisticated subtlety, not remotely as daring as the other Cretan examples mentioned here, would have been unthinkable for Metochites who had to comply with established traditions of donor portraiture in the capital.

Timothy E. Gregory, in his book *A History of Byzantium*, discussed the 'Beginnings of Decline'. In the second edition published in 2010, he states:

> Despite the political, economic and military difficulties, the fourteenth century witnessed many cultural developments … modified by intimate contact with western ideas and traditions … fourteenth-century Byzantine culture was based partly on the individualism and secularism of the twelfth century … but this was then enriched and refined by contact with the similar but very different world of the Latin conquerors … Obviously this differed from region to region, and we must always remember that the cultural achievements of this period were built largely on the labour of the farmers and tradespeople, whether they were Byzantine or Latin.[74]

Figure 8.6 Church of Saint John the Baptist, Axos, Rethymnon (Mylopotamos area), Crete, end of the fourteenth century, wall painting, detail from the south wall depicting the donor entering the gates of Paradise.

Source: Photo: author.

The Kavalariana donors, along with the rest of the Cretan regional patrons, fit very well into this description. Venetian Crete offers an abundance of small churches dated and datable to the Palaiologan period. Most of them are rather small edifices, with no evidence of use of expensive materials, and stylistic surveys find them invariably wanting when compared to their counterparts close to main urban centres.[75] Nevertheless, their wall paintings make a substantial contribution to Late Byzantine painting, not least because of the socio-economic testimony they present.

The extensive building activity that took place during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in regional Crete is an indirect indication of the countryside's economic prosperity brought by the Venetian trade. It has been established that the Venetians traded widely in products from the island, many of which remain popular to the present day – wine, cheese, honey and (from the late fifteenth century onwards) olive oil.[76] The current Cretan (mostly barren) landscape is rather misleading for the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century reality. Sources such as that of the fifteenth-century Florentine traveller Cristoforo Buondelmonti offer information which suggests that, when he visited the island, Crete had substantial forestation of cypresses and pine trees at least around the area of the White Mountains, where Selino is located.[77] The existence of cypress is corroborated by late fifteenth-century travellers, such as Felix Fabri and the pilgrim Jean Adornes.[78]

Figure 8.7 Ioannis Pagomenos, church of Saint Nicholas, Maza, Chania (Apokoronas area), 1325/26, west wall, dedicatory inscription, which reads: 'This holy and revered church of the saint and wonder-working and myroblytes (i.e. giving forth perfume) Nikolaos of Maza was painted with the contributions and labour of Demetrios Sarakinopoulos and Kostatinos Raptis for the half, Kostatinos Sarakinopoulos, Georgios Mavromatis, the priest Michael and of the whole of the village of Maza. The Lord knows their names. It was completed by the hand of the sinner Ioannis Pagomenos in the year 6834 [A.M.] [= AD 1325/26].'

Source: Photo: author.

Wood trade was of vital importance for the Serenissima and, while cypress could not be used for the building of ships, the main vehicle for her trade, it could be used for ship repairs, which were carried out in the two main ports in the island, Candia and Chania,[79] as well as for the manufacture of all sorts of furniture and religious objects, including icons, which in the post-Byzantine period became synonymous with the island's artistic production.[80] The prosperity that trade in such an important product brought to the area may well explain why it holds the record number of churches among the 20 provinces – *castellaniae* – into which the island was divided under the Venetians.[81]

The existence of so many churches with rich iconographic programmes is a remarkable achievement if we consider the remote location of the majority of Cretan villages. The patrons, whether individuals, small groups of families (as in the case of the church at Kavalariana) or whole village communities (as in the case of the Church of Saint Nicholas at Maza, 1325/26 [Figure 8.7] or the Church of the Virgin at Kakodiki, 1331/32, both in the prefecture of Chania)[82] had to find artists and persuade them to take a long trip away from main cities, travelling under

perilous conditions and with all their provisions, because in these locations the basic ingredients of a painter's trade would not have been readily available. The planning, therefore, had to be meticulous in order to ensure that the work was finished within the available window that the Cretan weather allowed for such activities, mainly between late March and mid-October.[83] Parenthetically, for these reasons, it is highly likely that the most remote locations attracted painters of a less-established reputation, willing to (literally) cover the extra kilometre for work. In turn, this could explain the discrepancies in style noticeable in the various Cretan regions.[84] Nevertheless, this achievement should be measured outside the parameters of stylistic quality. Its testimony, supported by archival evidence,[85] confirms a communication between the residents of the provinces and of the urban centres encouraged by the Venetian trade on the island. The traffic between remote regions and main cities was two-way (i.e. country-dwellers visited the cities, and vice versa), which, despite the difficulties entailed in this kind of travel, certainly facilitated the artistic developments in support of religious purposes in the Cretan provinces.[86]

The artistic testimony in this specific case study of Palaiologan provincial Crete transcends aesthetic judgements, in themselves subjective, and becomes a social and geographical mirror that provides us with vital information about the circumstances of its production. Being in awe of what Metochites' patronage resulted in, with exemplary style and top quality material, is only one way of looking at art. Another way would be to look at the conditions in which artistic accomplishments were achieved, the locality and means of the patrons; seen from this perspective, examples of provincial Palaiologan art are indicative of anything but 'decline'.

Notes

1 For El Greco's comment, see www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/12/081218132252. htm (accessed 4 March 2018); published by Hadjinicolaou (2008). For Vasari's *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, see Bettarini and Barocchi (1966–); for an English edition, see De Vere (1996). On Vasari's views on the Greek style, see Richardson, Woods and Franklin (2007: 376–8 [3.5.7]).

2 For a reproduction, see Nicholls (1999: 163) (Figure 139). El Greco's praise of Tintoretto's work suggests that he was not biased towards Byzantine art.

3 For a discussion on this subject, see Lymberopoulou forthcoming a.

4 Womersley (1994: vol. 1, xxxv, 446, 514.)

5 Ibid.: vol. 1, lxxxvi and vol. 3, 24.

6 Runciman (1976: 109).

7 Ibid: 107. It is highly unlikely that Vasari ever saw proper Byzantine art *in situ*. The closest he could have come to it would have been the mosaics of San Marco in Venice; however, their 'pure' Byzantine nature has been questioned recently in scholarship (James 2018).

8 Chatzidakis (1974a; 1974b; 1977).

9 The exhibition *Byzantine Art: A European Art*, which took place in Athens in 1964, about a decade before Chatzidakis' publications became available, is a characteristic event of that shift.

10 For example, Cutler (1984). For an overview and bibliography, see Tsamakda (2017).

11 For Byzantine mosaics of the Middle Byzantine period, the most renowned of which are Hosios Loukas (Boiotia), Daphni (Athens) and Nea Moni (on the island of Chios), see indicative: Diez and Demus (1931); Herbert (1978); Mouriki (1985);

Chatzidakis (1996). For ivories, see, in general, Goldschmidt and Weitzman (1930–34); Cutler (1985).

12 Cross (1930: 199); Cross and Sherbowitz-Wetzor (1953: 111).

13 Runciman (1976: 107). Gibbon described Hagia Sophia based on Byzantine literary sources, since he never visited either Constantinople or this particular church; see above note 7.

14 Mango (1986: 243).

15 Gouma-Peterson (1991: 128).

16 *The Oxford English Reference Dictionary* (1996: 370).

17 See, in general, Laiou (2009); Stathakopoulos (2014: 150–90).

18 Laiou (2009: 827).

19 Ćurčić and Mouriki (1991: 3).

20 Talbot Rice (1959: 88).

21 See p. xiv.

22 Mouriki (1991: 231). The question as to whether Palaiologan art forms part of Byzantine art is for another conference. The fact that this question seems to have been 'floating' in scholarship is suggested by André Grabar's 'Palaiologan art is always regarded as part of Byzantine art in general and rightly so': Grabar (1975: 15) (the need for confirmation probably indicates a level of questioning).

23 Mouriki (1995: 1–80). Doula Mouriki is one of the Byzantine art historians who engaged substantially in discussion regarding the Palaiologan style; hence my choice to look at some of her statements closely.

24 Ibid.: 80.

25 The art of the Chora monastery has attracted an enormous amount of attention in scholarship over the years. The standard reference works remain Underwood (1966) and (1975). See also Klein, Ousterhout and Pitarakis (2011).

26 (1967: xiv).

27 Mouriki (1995: 1) calls the monumental painting in Greece during this period one of 'striking diversity'.

28 See above, page 134 and note 22.

29 For a brief discussion with examples, see Lymberopoulou (2015: 28–9).

30 *The Oxford English Reference Dictionary* (1996: 412). See also above, note 16.

31 For a summary of the history of Crete under the Venetians, see Maltezou (1991).

32 Georgopoulou (1995, 2001).

33 Pre-1453 Cretan artistic production mainly identifies with wall paintings, while post-1453 is virtually synonymous with icons (panel painting), see Lymberopoulou (2010b).

34 Lymberopoulou (2010a: especially 162–4; 2013: 79–81).

35 For a list and further bibliography, see Lymberopoulou (2006: 194–8). For an interesting interpretation of the use of Byzantine emperors in inscription in churches in Venetian Crete, see Volan (2011: 441–3). See also Adashinskaya (2018).

36 The importance Venice attached to Crete is suggested by the fact that between 1211 and the beginning of the fourteenth century the Republic sent 10,000 colonists (*feudati*) to the island; this number was equivalent to one-sixth of Venice's population in 1252. Despite these efforts, the colonists were outnumbered by the native Cretans: Gasparis (1997: 31–5); Georgopoulou (2001: 43–5, 103).

37 For the church history on Venetian Crete, see Spanakis (1959); Tomadakis (1969–7); Chaireti (1974); Tsirpanlis (1985); Maltezou (1991: 26–9); Bolanakis (2002: 19–96).

38 For the church, see Spatharakis (2001: 111–14) (no. 39; with earlier bibliography); for the martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew in the Orthodox Church, see Xyngopoulos (1958).

39 On Saint Mamas, see Marava-Chatzinikolaou (1995).

40 For the church, see Gerola (1908 vol. 2: 343) (no. 21), Gerola-Lassithiotakis (1961: 36) (no. 132), Lassithiotakis (1970a: 181–3) (no. 79).

41 This is not an isolated example. Other Cretan churches identify sinners punished in hell as usurers using the word ζουράρης (please note that the examples are presented

following the prefectures from west to east within the island – that is, Chania, Rethymnon, Herakleion and Lassithi (see Figure 8.1) and alphabetically by village within each prefecture): in Chania in the Church of the Virgin, village of Karydi (Karydaki) Vamou (Apokoronas area), fourteenth/fifteenth century; Church of the Virgin, village of Sklavopoula (Selino area), end of fourteenth/beginning of the fifteenth century. In Rethymnon in the Church of Saint John the Baptist, village of Axos (Mylopotamos area), end of fourteenth century; Saint John the Evangelist, village of Kato Valsamonero (Rethymnon area), c.1400; in the Church of the Saviour, village of Spili (Hagios Vasileios area), second half of the fourteenth century. In Herakleion in the Church of Saint Pelagia, village of Ano Viannos, 1360 (see above, note 38); in the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin and Saint John the Baptist, village of Mathia (Pediada area), mid-fourteenth century. In Lassithi in the Church of Saint George, village of Kavousi (Ierapetra area), mid-fourteenth century; Church of Saint John the Baptist, village of Kritsa (Merambello area), 1389/90. At the same time, two Cretan churches identify the usurer with words used in the Greek language: in Chania in the Church of Saint John the Baptist, village of Deliana (Kisamos area), c.1300, the usurer is labelled ὁ τοκῶν ὑπέρπυρον, while in Rethymnon in the Church of the Virgin, village of Veni (Mylopotamos area), 1313, he is identified with an inscription reading ὁ τόκον λαβών. For the Cretan churches with representations of hell, there is a forthcoming publication by Angeliki Lymberopoulou and Rembrandt Duits, *Hell in the Byzantine World: A History of Art and Religion in Venetian Crete and the Eastern Mediterranean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), following an International Networks project funded by the Leverhulme Trust. A database will accompany the publication, which in due course will be available to the public upon registration, and can be found at: http://ledaproject.org.uk/wp-admin/ (where leda stands for 'leverhulme damned').

42 Lymberopoulou (2007).

43 On the subject, see Lymberopoulou (2006: 185) and note 136 (with further bibliography); Vassilaki (2009).

44 Delvoye (1967: 352). Dr Chrysa Ranoutsaki is currently preparing a publication on this monument which, remarkably, has never to date been the subject of a monograph.

45 On the church, see Spatharakis (2001: 197–9) (no. 65; with earlier bibliography); on Manouel and Ioannis Phokas, see Gouma-Peterson (1983).

46 Vassilaki (1987: 82); Spatharakis (2001: 198).

47 For example, the representation of Saint Constantine on horseback among other military saints in the Church of Saint Constantine in the village of Drymiskos, Rethymnon (Hagios Vasileios area), dated to the early fifteenth century: Spatharakis (2015: 70–1) (no. 8), Figures 136–137. Constantine is also depicted as a saint on his own in Cretan churches (without being accompanied by his mother, Saint Helena, and holding the Holy Cross between them, which is a much more common iconography for both saints), for example in the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, in the village of Alikampos, Chania (Apokoronas area), 1315/16: Spatharakis (2001: Figure 39); in the Church of the Archangel Michael in the village of Kavalariana, Chania (Selino area), 1327/28: Lymberopoulou (2006: Figure 38) (on 307).

48 Spatharakis (2010: 97–119) (no. 10).

49 The Church of Saint Phanourios in Valsamonero (Kainourgio area) seems to be among the furthest removed from the capital (see Figure 8.1); however, this was a major monastic foundation: Borboudakis, Gallas and Wessel (1983: 313–21); Psilakis (1994: 58–9).

50 Gerola and Lassithiotakis (1961) catalogue a total of 845 churches but still a number of existing churches are missing from this invaluable publication.

51 For example, the illustration of the story of the boy from Mytilene being brought back to his mother from captivity in the church of Saint George in the village of Lambini, Rethymnon (Hagios Vasileios area): Spatharakis (2015: 134–5), dates the monument to the end of the twelfth century, that is before the Venetian occupation of the island; however, I remain sceptical about a date before the thirteenth century for this church.

Usually, the story is conveyed by the boy sitting at the rear of Saint George's horse: Lymberopoulou (2013: 73–7); the representation of the Holy Trinity outside the norms of Byzantine art within the sanctuary of the Orthodox church of the Virgin in the village of Roustika, also in Rethymnon (Rethymnon area), dated 1381/82: Spatharakis (1999: 178–224) (no. 18), especially pp. 184–5, 198–206; the rather gruesome punishments sinners suffer in hell in the Church of Saint Paraskevi in the village of Kitiros, Chania (Selino area), dated to 1372/73: see above, note 41; for a reproduction: Lymberopoulou (2013: colour Plate IX).

52 Lymberopoulou (2010a: 160–2; 2013: 92–5).
53 Lymberopoulou (2006: 196–7) and notes 12, 13. See also above note 35.
54 Ibid.: 194–5. English translation:

> during the present century, in the year 6836 [A.M.] [= AD 1327/28], when Crete is ruled by the great Venetians our masters, this present church of the great Archangel Michael of the heavenly hosts was made with the expenses and contributions by Theotokis Kotzis and Manuel Melisourgos and Nikitas Sideris and Demetrios and their children. Pray for me the sinner Ioannis who happened to be the/a painter. Amen.

55 Lymberopoulou (2013: 61–3).
56 Underwood (1966 vol. 1: 15).
57 Lymberopoulou (2006: *passim*).
58 Underwood (1966; 1975); Klein *et al.* (2011).
59 On the architecture of the church of the Archangel Michael at Kavalariana, see Lymberopoulou (2006: 14–18).
60 Ibid.: 10–11, 129–84. It should be noted that the name Ioannis (John) is among the most popular names for men in the Greek Orthodox Church. On Crete, churches dedicated to St John are surpassed in number only by those dedicated to the Virgin and to St George: Gerola-Lassithiotakis (1961: 143, 144 and 142 respectively).
61 Lymberopoulou (2006: 204–17).
62 Gerstel (2011: 135–6). See also Marinis (2017: 53–9).
63 Underwood (1966 vol. 3: 335, 336, 338).
64 See above, note 54.
65 On the north wall, on the east reveal of the middle blind arch, a young male donor grouped with the Kotzis family is actually named Michael. Nevertheless, his beardless face, side-placement within the blind arch, and the omission of his name from the dedicatory inscription would suggest that he was a dependant within a family and not contributing money from his own pocket, a contribution that the inscription states explicitly for the four men it mentions: Lymberopoulou (2006: 206) (no. 7), 208–9 and colour plate 51 (on p. 369); see also above, note 54.
66 Underwood (1966 vol. 1: 42–3).
67 Lymberopoulou (2006: 213–17).
68 See above, note 54.
69 Indicative examples include the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, village of Alikampos, Chania (Apokoronas area), dated 1315/16, painted by Ioannis Pagomenos: Lymberopoulou (2006: Figure 82) (on 330); Spatharakis (2001: 48–50) (no. 15); Church of Christ the Saviour in the village of Myrthios, Rethymnon (Hagios Vasileios area), c. 1400: Spatharakis, (2015, Figure 434). See also Lymberopoulou forthcoming b.
70 As outlined by Demus (1948). Scholarship has moved on significantly since the publication of Demus' landmark work; nevertheless, the basic principles and concepts of the hierarchy of the complicated Byzantine architecture as presented in this work remain fundamental starting points.
71 Spatharakis (2015: Figures 61–63). For the church, see ibid.: 16–36 (no. 4). See also Spatharakis (2001: 127–32) (no. 45).

72 Spatharakis (2010: Figures 333–336). For the church, see ibid.: 215–28 (no. 23). See also Spatharakis (2001: 124–6) (no. 44).

73 For the church, see Spatharakis (2010: 97–119) (no. 10).

74 Gregory (2010: 367).

75 It should be noted that, due to the urban redevelopment in the Cretan main cities on the north coast, a large number of churches that were situated there have been lost.

76 Lymberopoulou (Figure 8.1) (2010a: 162–4; 2013: 79–81).

77 Van Spitael (1981: 214); Bayer (2007: 17).

78 For Felix Fabri, see Hassler (1843–49, vol. 3: 280); for Jean Adornes, see Heers and de Groer (1978: 159).

79 Georgopoulou (2001: 67–73).

80 Newall (2013).

81 Lymberopoulou (2010a: 160–2; 2013: 92–5).

82 The village of Maza is in the Apokoronas area, while the village of Kakodiki is in the Selino area. For the churches, see Spatharakis (2001: 70–2) (no. 23) (Maza) and 82–4 (no. 27) (Kakodiki); Lymberopoulou (2006: 132, 143–5, 152–4, 166, 175–7) (Maza) and ibid.: 132, 145–8, 154–5, 166–7, 177–9 (Kakodiki); Tsamakda (2012: 33–131) (Kakodiki). See also Tsamakda (2016: 228–33). The collective donation mentioned in these inscriptions is dicussed extensively in Lymberopoulou forthcoming c.

83 Lymberopoulou (2010a: 166).

84 For some observations on the subject of Cretan wall paintings within the context of Byzantine art, see Tsamakda (2016: 219–28).

85 The *Archivio di Stato di Venezia* (the State Archives of Venice) remains one of the richest sources of information on Crete at the time it was part of Venice's *Stato da Mar*; it can be accessed at www.archiviodistatovenezia.it/web/index.php?id=98

86 On this interesting subject, see Gasparis (2016).

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9 Liturgical and devotional artefacts in the Venetian churches of the Levant, thirteenth to fifteenth centuries

Livia Bevilacqua

Usually seen from a Venetian perspective, traditional scholarship on the cultural and artistic relationships between Venice and Byzantium has focused on the influence that Byzantine culture has exercised on the Italian city.[1] While more recent studies have begun to single out the Western influence on Eastern art, this chapter seeks to move to a perspective which is different from both approaches: that of the artistic production and circulation among Venetian communities in the territories that were either Byzantine or deeply imbued with Byzantine culture (the Eastern coasts and islands of the Mediterranean). The focus of my study – limited, on this occasion, to the Late Byzantine period – is on liturgical implements and small furniture and portable devotional objects: within this category, artefacts of a diverse nature may be included, from books to silverware, from textiles to icons. Such items constitute an interesting paradigm in the artistic scenario of the Palaiologan era, and for several reasons: primarily, because they are 'movable' objects, and therefore reflect better than other media the intense circulation of people – as well as tastes, and visual models – throughout the Mediterranean basin and beyond.[2] They also reached a wide range of recipients, and, far from qualifying these objects as 'low' or 'high' from a quality standpoint (if it is true that the definition 'minor arts' is no longer acceptable), I wish rather to stress the highest dissemination possible of such objects in the society, from the largest monastic establishments to the smallest parish churches of the islands inland. Moreover, although very few of these objects (often like the churches that hosted them) have survived to the present day, written documents offer an invaluable source on their production, acquisition, patronage and circulation. In the pages that follow, I will refer to the documentary materials preserved in the State Archives of Venice, which provide an unavoidable starting point for any research on the Venetian communities in their homeland as well as overseas.

While analysing the holdings of the Venetian churches on the island of Negroponte as a case study, this chapter aims to take advantage of the documentary sources and, ultimately, to understand what they disclose about the Mediterranean world in the last phase of the Middle Ages. The scenario is mainly discontinuous, for several reasons. First, the actual survival of the artefacts is minimal compared to what was produced and circulating; second, for most of what has been preserved until today we do not possess certain information on the circumstances of

its production and on its actual provenance. Archival research is extremely helpful, despite offering only partial and limited information on the artistic aspect; along with other types of sources (e.g. descriptions and accounts of pilgrimages), it would offer an interesting glimpse into the subject matter, but it still needs to be fully surveyed for this purpose. Finally, the research is still in progress, therefore necessarily incomplete, and new data may emerge as the work continues.

As is highlighted in this volume, artistic production in the Palaiologan period did not 'decline', despite the increasing political uncertainty and economic crisis of the Byzantine Empire in the two final centuries of its history. On the contrary, a – possibly unprecedented – flourishing of the arts characterises the entire Mediterranean area – an area where artists, patrons and dealers circulate freely, engaging in an intense exchange of objects, skills and practices that makes art in this phase so lively, and, in a sense, international.[3] The Venetians were among the most tireless travellers in this network of commercial, diplomatic and cultural routes,[4] though their economic interests, in particular, meant that their relationships with other communities were not always smooth. More specifically with Byzantium, the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries are dotted with covenant pacts and commercial privileges,[5] while the two powers were confronting the other Italian maritime powers for the supremacy of the ports, and the Ottoman Turks for their own survival.[6] However, the quality and number of art works realised did not suffer dramatically; instead, the mechanisms of the artistic production changed. Although the old system of patronage remains as a major agent of artistic initiative, more and more specialised workshops produce artefacts that are subsequently sold.

Venice had always played a major role in covering the maritime routes of the Mediterranean since its very appearance on the European scene, as early as in the ninth century, and Venetians had settled in all the centres between the north Adriatic and the shores of the Eastern Mediterranean.[7] However, since the eleventh century, the Venetian community had been officially granted residence and commercial premises in most of the Byzantine Empire – as were also, over time, other Western and non-Western communities (other Italians and Europeans, if geographically defined, or with confessional connotation, such as the Jews), with whom the Venetians shared spaces of activity or whose neighbourhoods were situated beside theirs.[8] The establishment of a Venetian 'quarter' in Constantinople dates back to 1082.[9] After the Byzantine capital was reconquered by Michael VIII Palaiologos, the quarter by the Golden Horn was given back to Venice in 1277, although resized, but essentially reproducing the asset of what they possessed before the Fourth Crusade.[10] The Venetians became again the recipients of commercial privileges that partly recovered those awarded in the past and set the taxes they had to pay to the Empire.[11] The Venetian quarter of Constantinople serves as the 'paradigm' for the majority of the Venetian settlements in the Mediterranean ports. The traditional structure of such quarters included a house for the governor (who was called *bailo*), warehouses (*fondachi*), kilns and docks, and sometimes rights over large pieces of land and sea. A major role in the life of these communities was played by the local churches (the Venetians ended up owning

four in Constantinople).[12] These local churches typically depended upon churches and monasteries in the homeland, their clergy being appointed by abbots of such monasteries and having to respond both to them (mainly concerning administrative matters) and to the local community in terms of 'pastoral' needs Most of the information we possess about these establishments can therefore be found in the folders that preserve the documents of monasteries in Venice (San Giorgio Maggiore, San Nicolò di Lido, Santi Felice e Fortunato di Ammiana, among others) in their archives, now held in the State Archive of Venice.[13] Since the keepers of the overseas churches were expected to report on anything concerning the life of the religious communities, any piece of information regarding the churches' furniture and liturgical vessels would be recorded there too. Although they often use standard formulae, these documents are of extreme interest for visualising the endowment of these churches. The aim of this chapter is to offer an insight into some of these, in a profoundly multi-cultural context.

Moving a bit further from the capital of Byzantium, the case study I wish to present here is a very particular one: the island of Negroponte (Euboea), which had already been a key hub for Venetian trade in the Mediterranean under the Komnenian dynasty, and preserves important archaeological testimonies of both the Byzantine and Venetian presence.[14] After the Fourth Crusade and the partition of the territories conquered by the Latins, a large portion of the island fell under Venetian rule. As a consequence of this event, some relevant changes in the urban asset were carried out, in order to meet the needs for Venetian defence, government, cult and trade. The city, which occupies a crucial position on the Euripos Strait, received new fortifications, within which it experienced a remarkable new urban and monumental development. Inside the city walls, along with the palace of the *bailo*, the most outstanding buildings must have been the two churches of Santa Maria and San Marco, the latter facing a piazza, or crossroads, equipped with a loggia.[15] In compliance with its obligations as a dependency of the monastery of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice, the prior of the church of San Marco was requested to sign a *promissione* (a legal agreement) in which he had to scrupulously report on the state of all the goods in possession of the church. We are fortunate to be able to read one of these documents, which dates to 1270.[16] According to the agreement, the prior, Benedetto, undertakes to take care for five years of all the assets of the church of San Marco in Negroponte, including all the supplies used for the daily offices of the monastery; he pledges he will not give away any of them, and he will maintain them all. A detailed inventory of all the vessels and furniture belonging to the building follows, including a number of precious objects.[17] In the list, silverware comes first and includes: a cross (whether a processional or an altar cross is not specified[18]), a chalice and a censer (*turribulum*). Textiles are then mentioned, the function of each item being stated at the same time: altar cloths are distinguished between those placed daily on the altar as a protective covering and those used for the Eucharistic services; a cushion (*culcita*), a cloth and two linen cloths '*pro mortuis*'; various vestments, each for a different liturgical usage, are also carefully listed. Manuscripts are numbered next: liturgical books to be used in the church are divided into categories (missals,

manuals, psalters, passionaries, sequentiaries, *istoriales*, epistolaries and evangelistaries) and their format is specified (one or more volumes) as well as their liturgical purpose (liturgy of either the night or the day).

In an attempt to visualise further the features of these objects, it is worth reading another document, again from Negroponte, but dating to two centuries later. Immediately after the fall of Constantinople, when Negroponte was still a Venetian domain, Paolo Pasqualigo, the chaplain of the regiment settled on the Greek island, wrote to the abbot of San Giorgio Maggiore, reporting to him of the recovery of a number of objects which had been in the possession of the church of San Marco.[19] The long letter – written in Venetian – which he sends to his superiors is dated to 1454. Pasqualigo scrupulously updates the abbot about the situation of the monastery's rented-out properties.[20] Above all, the chaplain demonstrates a real concern for the decorum of the church, even from the artistic point of view: he has promptly commissioned a beautiful crucifix with St Mary and St John ('*Quanto alla giexia vostra ho fatto 1° bellissimo crucifixo con S. Maria e S. Zuane che basteria fina in la giexia de miser S. Marcho*'). Although we do not have any other hint about the appearance of this artefact, the term used may refer to a painting similar in type to the so-called 'lanced cross' of San Marco.[21] But – by Pasqualigo's own account – a particularly difficult task is monopolising his efforts, more than anything else: he is searching for and trying to recover a number of objects owned by the monastery, that – he has discovered – have been removed or pawned. He has already managed to recover some of them; and he will try to do the same with the ones still missing, but, for this purpose, an official mandate from the abbot is needed as soon as possible. On the other hand, the law is undoubtedly on his side and will facilitate his decisions: he says, in fact, that there is a rule that states that whatever belongs to the church cannot be pawned. Therefore, he is determined to have the priest who has taken away the objects excommunicated: '*una leze in mio favor che dize che chosse de giexia non se puol impegnar ... volio far far 1ª scumenegazion, azo i possa invegnir in quelle cosse che son state usurpade*'. He has already found a good number of vessels, and provides a list, with some remarks on the state of preservation of some of them (thus offering us some rare descriptive information): a cross covered with silver, a retable depicting Our Lady (also partly silver-gilt), a silver-gilt incense burner with a missing leg, a small incense boat (*navicella*) without its lid, a silver paten; he has also recovered a missal book that had been pawned. Pasqualigo will try his best to have these items returned to the church. Among the objects he has managed to recover, he can list some books and various textiles which he has repaired. Furthermore, he has bought new equipment, including altar cloths, and has received a chalice worth 8 ounces from the local archbishop. He believes, however, that some of these vessels and books are no longer needed in Negroponte, and asks the abbot to have them shipped to Venice. Pasqualigo then describes all the improvements made to the furniture of the church, paying attention to the adequacy of lighting and reporting on urgent repairs needed to the attic and the windows of the house in which he is staying. Moreover, he has carried out all this work at his own expense, and complains about the scarcity of offerings from the locals: '*non vedo*

alchun che metese 1° soldo per adornar la vostra giexia'.[22] Paolo Pasqualigo is claiming – as is obvious – money from his superior, in order to conclude the procedure and to cover his expenses for the making of new objects.

The document thus provides us with a 'cross-section' of the everyday tasks of a cleric charged with administrative responsibilities in the colony, and seeking to show himself worthy of the task. During the troubled years preceding the fall of Constantinople into the hands of the Ottomans, there may indeed have been a loosening of control over the treasuries and belongings of the Latin churches of the whole of the Levant; this document may attest to a tentative effort to remedy the loss, in one of those establishments. Only a few years later, in 1470, Negroponte itself will be conquered by the Ottomans, and the church of San Marco will disappear, to be replaced by a mosque.[23]

Pasqualigo's report is unusually detailed, but the lists included in the documents from Negroponte match other, usually earlier, ones, which refer to other settlements and help us in a different, and more slippery, task: the attempt to understand the provenance of the objects. Who were the 'actors' of their production (patrons, merchants, 'collectors', artists) and what was their social and ethnic background? Were the works commissioned/purchased *in situ*, or were they imported from the West? Exactly what kind of objects were exchanged, for what purpose, and what kind of testimonies and documents can we benefit from? How many 'new' works, and how many ready-made artefacts circulated? Some clues are given in the vocabulary used in the aforementioned documents. For instance, the *navicella* (incense boat), mentioned in Pasqualigo's report, indicates a type of oblong incense case of the standing type, only in use in Western churches, while the Byzantine altar would have been equipped with an incense bowl of a round shape with a handle.[24] It is therefore possible that these objects would either be imported from Venice or realised *in loco* by Western craftsmen, or even (but this third option seems to me less likely) by Byzantine workshops, following a model provided by the commissioning clergy. Other implements could, instead, be purchased from workshops supplying both Byzantine and Western churches, since the same tools were equally used in the rites of both communities, as was the case with the swinging/hanging censer (*turribulum*), mentioned in the 1270 document. Such 'purchases' are indeed documented elsewhere, and even outside of the Palaiologan era.

In fact, detailed documents on the liturgical equipment and furniture of churches are much earlier in date. In the 'San Nicolò di Lido' archival parchment collection, a document is preserved, notarised in Constantinople in 1231. It records the conclusion of a credit, worth 95 *hyperperi*, between Giovanni, bishop of Rhaidestos, and Stefano, former prior of the church of San Nicolò *Embuli Venetorum* in Constantinople, for the purchase of sacred vessels in Constantinople. Giovanni writes:

> *de quibus yperperis — comparavimus pro utilitate et negociis nostre capelle bacilia duo argenti, anpolletas duas argenti, et terribullum unum argenti adque examita duo, de quibus examitis fecimus duo indumenta id est*

dalmaticam unam et strictam unam. [We bought … two silver bowls, two small silver ampoules, a silver incense burner and two finely woven textiles, which have been used to produce liturgical vestments: a dalmatic and a tight tunic.][25]

The episcopal church of Rhaidestos must have been short of silver vessels for liturgical use,[26] and the bishop has provided for its completion.

Unfortunately, the list is extremely concise and does not indulge in the artistic quality proper, nor even in the description of the listed objects. However, it is particularly interesting that, apparently, such objects have been purchased – most likely in Constantinople[27] – as ready-made pieces, and were not produced on purpose.

We do not know whether the artisans who produced this silverware were Byzantines or Westerners. The composition of such workshops in Byzantium, at that historical period, is not easy to determine. The reason lies not only in the paucity of the information we can gather, but above all in their, as it were, 'mixed' character, since masters and craftsmen of diverse provenance and ethnic background worked side by side in these workshops.[28] I would rather dismiss, however, the idea that Giovanni of Rhaidestos had the pieces imported from his homeland, based on a historical reason: the export of luxuryware from Venice towards Byzantium would significantly increase only later, beginning in the second half of the fourteenth century, when Byzantine local production was in decline due to the political and economic crisis.[29] In that later period – as Anna Ballian has stressed – liturgical vessels (even those used in Greek churches) would be produced by silversmiths in the Venetian colonies: several of them are attested in Üsküdar, Dubrovnik and Candia, and Constantinople must also have been equipped with a certain number of them.[30]

Based on all the documents cited here, and on others included in a separate database,[31] we might formulate a 'virtual' configuration of the endowment of a medium-sized church run by Venetian clergy in the East, such as could be well exemplified by the church of San Marco in Negroponte, which can be visualised in its articulation in Table 9.1, which I show here as a sample.

The entries in Table 9.1 include different types of objects, categorised as Silverware, Textiles, Books, and Portable paintings. In each category, the original mention in the documents is quoted in the original language, accompanied by an English translation of the type of item, quantity, format and description of the object (if applicable), its function, its provenance and any other piece of information available about the manufacture; finally, the complete citation of the archival (or other) source and date. In the final draft of Table 9.1, each item entry will be accompanied by a picture of an existing object, with the caveat that these are only referred to as examples of what the object might have looked like, and it is not my intention – at least at this stage of the research – to propose any identification with actual surviving art works;[32] information about the patrons or commissioners, as well as about the place (church, monastery, etc.) in which the objects were kept will be included as well.

Table 9.1 Liturgical equipment of the church of San Marco of Negroponte, 1270–1454

Category	Text	Item	Quantity	Format/ Material or Description	Function	Provenance/ Manufactured	Document mentioned (Archival source)	Document mentioned (year)
Silverware	Crux una argentea	Cross	1	Silver	Altar or processional		ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
	Calix argenteus unus	Chalice	1	Silver	Eucharist (altar)	Either western or Byzantine context	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
	Turibulum argenteum unum	Censer (swinging)	1	Silver		Either western or Byzantine context	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
	Crux una argentea	Cross	1	Silver	Altar or processional		ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41	1274, Rialto
	Calix argenteus unus	Chalice	1	Silver	Eucharist (altar)	Either western or Byzantine context	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41	1274, Rialto
	Turibulum argenteum unum	Censer (swinging)	1	Silver		Either western or Byzantine context	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41	1274, Rialto
	1a croxe choverta darzento	Cross	1	Silver (covered)	Altar or processional?		ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 (n.n.)	1454, Negroponte
	1o teribullo darzento dorado senza el pe	Censer (swinging)		Gilded silver		Either western or Byzantine context	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 (n.n.)	1454, Negroponte
	1a navexella pizolla senza sua coverta	Censer (standing)				Western context	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 (n.n.)	1454, Negroponte
	1a patena darzento	Paten		Silver	Eucharist (altar)		ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 (n.n.)	1454, Negroponte

	1o challexe de oz 8	Chalice	1	8 ounces	Eucharist (altar)	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 (n.n.)	1454, Negroponte
	certi arzenti	some silverware		Silver		ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 (n.n.)	1454, Negroponte
Textiles	*Panni pro altare duo*	Rag	2		Altar cloth	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
	Cul<cita?> una	Cushion	1		For the altar or for the dead	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
	Pannum unum… pro mortuis	Rag	1		Cloth for the dead	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
	Linteamina duo pro mortuis	Linen	2		Linen cloth for the dead	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
	Paramentum unum cum casubla una alba	Liturgical vestment	1	Vestment with a chasuble (sleeveless vestment)	Celebration of the mass	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
	unum… paramentum sine casubla	Liturgical vestment	1	Vestment without a chasuble	Celebration of the mass	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
	Cappa una	Cape	1			ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
	Toalie due de altare	Altar cloth	2		Altar cloth	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia

(*Continued*)

Table 9.1 (Continued)

Category	Text	Item	Quantity	Format/ Material or Description	Function	Provenance/ Manufactured	Document mentioned (Archival source)	Document mentioned (year)
	Panni qui sunt cottidie in altare	Rag			Altar cloth		ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
	Fora una de casubla una de panno	Chasuble	1				ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
	Dalmatica una	Dalmatic	1				ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
	Tunicella una de examito viride	Small tunic	1	Samite, green			ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
	Panni tria pro altare	Rag	3		Altar cloth		ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41	1274, Rialto
	Drapum unum	Drape	1				ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41	1274, Rialto
	Lintamina duo pro mortuis	Linen	2				ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41	1274, Rialto
	Paramentum unum bonum cum planeta	Liturgical vestment	1				ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41	1274, Rialto
	Paramentum alium cum casulla alba	Liturgical vestment	1				ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41	1274, Rialto

Planetam unam bonam cum stolam et manipulo	Planet	1		1274, Rialto	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41
Pluvialem unum	Pluvial	1		1274, Rialto	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41
Toagle due de altare	Altar cloth	2	Altar cloth	1274, Rialto	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41
Alii panni qui sunt cotidie in altare	Rag		Altar cloth	1274, Rialto	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41
Fora una nigra de una planeta		1		1274, Rialto	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41
Dalmatica una	Dalmatic	1		1274, Rialto	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41
Tunicela una de examito viridi	Small tunic	1	Samite, green	1274, Rialto	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41
alguni paramenti che non se puol adoperar	Liturgical vestment			1454, Negroponte	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 (n.n.)
Io paramento et hollo conzado, con el qual cellebro	Liturgical vestment			1454, Negroponte	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 (n.n.)
mantelli 3 per laltar	Altar cover	3	Altar cloth	1454, Negroponte	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 (n.n.)

(Continued)

Table 9.1 (Continued)

Category	Text	Item	Quantity	Format/Material or Description	Function	Provenance/Manufactured	Document mentioned (Archival source)	Document mentioned (year)
Books	*Missalle unum*	Missal	1				ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
	Breviarium unum divisum in duobus voluminibus	Breviary	1	In two volumes			ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
	Antiphonaria de nocte duo	Antiphonary	2		Book of antiphons for the night liturgy		ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
	[antiphonaria] tres de die	Antiphonary	3		Book of antiphons for the daily liturgy		ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
	Manuale unum	Manual book	1				ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
	Psalteria tria	Psalter	3				ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
	Passionarium unum	Passional	1				ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
	Sequentionarium unum	Sequentionary	1				ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
	Breviarium unum et missalle unum ambo in uno volumine	Breviary and Missal	1				ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia

Epistolarium et evangelistarium	Epistles and Gospels	1 or 2?	In one volume?		ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
Istoriale unum de littera breventana	"Istoriale"	1	Beneventan script	Western context	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 38	1270, Venezia
Misalem unum	Missal	1			ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41	1274, Rialto
<…> unum		1			ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41	1274, Rialto
Breviarium unum divisum in duobus voluminibus	Breviary	1	In two volumes		ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41	1274, Rialto
Antiphonaria duo de nocte	Antiphonary	2		Book of antiphons for the night liturgy	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41	1274, Rialto
[antiphonaria] tria de die	Antiphonary	3		Book of antiphons for the daily liturgy	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41	1274, Rialto
Manuale unum	Manual book	1			ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41	1274, Rialto
Psalteria tria	Psalter	3			ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41	1274, Rialto
Passionarium unum	Passional	1			ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41	1274, Rialto

Table 9.1 (Continued)

Category	Text	Item	Quantity	Format/ Material or Description	Function	Provenance/ Manufactured	Document mentioned (Archival source)	Document mentioned (year)
	Sequentiarium unum	Sequentionary	1				ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41	1274, Rialto
	Breviarium unum in uno volumine	Breviary	1				ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41	1274, Rialto
	Epistularium unum et Evangelistarium	Epistles and Gospels	1 or 2?	In one volume?			ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41	1274, Rialto
	Istoriale unum de littera breventana	"Istoriale"	1	Beneventan script		Western context	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 nr. 41	1274, Rialto
	1o mesal	Missal	1		Book for the mass		ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 (n.n.)	1454, Negroponte
	alguni libri i qual son mezi	Books					ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 (n.n.)	1454, Negroponte
Portable paintings	*1o bellissimo crucifixo con S. Maria e S. Zuane*	Crucifix	1	Wooden? Crucifix with images of the Virgin Mary and St. John	Display in church	Veneto-Byzantine context?	ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 (n.n.)	1454, Negroponte
	Anchona 1a de nostra dona con 1o pocho darzento	Icon	1	Wooden? Silver cover (part); Icon of the Virgin Mary			ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126 (n.n.)	1454, Negroponte

In the late medieval period, the church of San Marco in Venice was reordered according to the Byzantine model, from both the architectural/decorative and liturgical points of view.[33] To limit our analysis to precious liturgical furniture, the Pala d'Oro itself is the result of a combination of Byzantine enamel plaques of different dates, assembled in a goldsmith's frame *fabriqué à Venise*, whose final appearance was shaped in the mid-fourteenth century: a markedly Byzantine iconography is easily displayed in a retable that serves a typically Western ritual habit.[34]

If, on the one hand, San Marco was indeed the church of the *doge*, and therefore enjoyed a special status, not necessarily adopted by all religious establishments of the Serenissima, this demonstrates, on the other hand, that the Venetians felt completely comfortable in introducing diverse, Eastern (in this case, Byzantine) elements into their liturgical performances, and therefore very freely incorporated 'exotic' elements in their liturgical furniture.[35] The territories of the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly the islands, apparently provided the perfect soil for such merging of inspiration, also articulated in a fusion of styles and iconographies in wall paintings and icons.[36]

A nonchalant incorporation of heterogeneous parts – indiscriminately Western and Byzantine – into one and the same artefact was in fact very common in Venice and its area of influence. Along with the Pala d'Oro of San Marco, the Pala d'Oro of Caorle cathedral – assembled in various phases during the thirteenth century – attests to that.[37] The reliquary of the head of Saint Blaise, in the cathedral of Dubrovnik, is also the result of an assemblage of Western and Byzantine enamel plaques with busts of saints, mounted into a later Venetian-made skullcap-shaped support, and therefore offers another example among several that could be cited.[38]

To conclude these few lines – that, as mentioned, refer to a still ongoing study – the context in which artists and goldsmiths and silversmiths operated in the Palaiologan era must have been extremely fluid, and far more open to new ideas than we might think at first glance, where Catholic and non-Catholic communities interacted with considerable creativity and freedom. The circulation of liturgical vessels, relatively well documented in the written sources and through a number of still preserved examples, provides remarkable evidence of, or at least an extremely significant clue to, that fluidity.

Archival sources

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Archivio di Stato di Venezia, San Nicolò di Lido, Pergamene, b. 2.

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Notes

1 A milestone in the studies on the artistic relationships between Venice and the Byzantine East was the exhibition *Venezia e Bisanzio*, held in the Palazzo Ducale in 1974 and curated by some of the most distinguished Italian scholars of Venice and of Byzantium of the time. The catalogue's introductory essay by Sergio Bettini set the standard for the studies on Venetian medieval art in the following decades (Bettini 1974).

2 The notion of circulation involves people as well as objects. The latter – thanks to their portability – not only serve as currency of exchange between different communities, in different geographical areas, but also contribute, in the long term, to the conveying of ideas, meanings, patterns and techniques, interacting with people and with other ideas. They produce a unifying (in our case visual) culture, thus working as 'social agents', to quote Alfred Gell (Gell 1998). On the concept of portability and on the pathways of circulation and reciprocal contamination of objects, with a focus on the medieval Mediterranean, see also Grabar (1997); Hoffman (2001) and Shalem (2016); more specifically on Byzantine precious objects, see Hetherington (2008) and Bosselmann-Ruickbie (2018).

3 Cutler (1995); Harris, Holmes and Russell (2012); Iacobini (2017); Lymberopoulou (2018).

4 Thiriet (1975); Laiou (1982); Ferluga (1992).

5 Pozza and Ravegnani (1996).

6 Ostrogorsky (1963); Nicol (1988); Ravegnani (1998, 2006); Herrin (2007).

7 Ferluga (1992); Georgopoulou (2001).

8 Berger (1995).

9 Martin (1978); Pozza and Ravegnani (1993); Jacoby (2002); Madden (2002); Frankopan (2004).

10 Maltezou (1978); Magdalino (1996, 2000); Jacoby (2001); Concina (2002); Jacoby (2007); Ağir (2013).

11 Chrysostomides (1970), reprinted in Chrysostomides (2011).

12 Janin (1969).

13 Tafel and Thomas (1856); Morozzo della Rocca and Lombardo (1940); Lanfranchi (1968).

14 Koder (1973: 90–2): Kontogiannis (2012: 29–56). For a wider perspective offered by the documents in the State Archives in Venice, in terms of chronological and geographical perspective, see the remarks offered in Bevilacqua (2016, 2018).

15 Koder (1973: 90–2); Pozza (1996: 614–15); Borsari (2000); Jacoby (2002).

16 Orlando (2005); Koumanoudi (2011).

17 Archivio di Stato di Venezia (ASVe), San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126, n. 38:

> *Bonis vero usualibus dictae ecclesiae quae sunt: Crux una argentea, Calix argenteus unus, Turribulum argenteum unum, Panni pro altare duo, Culcita una, Pannum unum et linteamina duo pro mortuis, Paramentum unum cum Casubla una alba et unum aliud Paramentum sine Casubla, Cappa una. toalie due de altare et alii Panni qui sunt cottidie in altare, Missalle unum, Breviarium unum divisum in duobus voluminibus, Antiphonaria de nocte duo, et tres de die, Manuale unum, Psalteria tria, Passionarium unum, Sequentionarium unum, Breviarium unum et Missalle unum ambo in uno volumine, Epistularium et Evangelistarium, Istoriale*

unum de littera breventana, fora una de casubla una de panno, Dalmatica una et tunicella una de examito viride …

<div align="right">

(1270, 10 gennaio, indizione XIII, Venezia;
abstract in Orlando (2005: 164–5, no. 82)

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On the church in Negroponte depending on San Giorgio Maggiore, see also Koumanoudi (2011). The parchment on which this document is written is badly preserved, but the whole text (which is, as far as we know, unpublished) can be compared with a later document from 1274 – in both cases, the full excerpt of the document is published in Bevilacqua (2016, 2018): ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126, n. 41. Here, Marco Bollani, abbot of San Giorgio Maggiore, commissions Benedict, prior of San Marco in Negroponte, with the collection of a payment from John from Bologna for the church of San Giorgio in Thebes, and to perform all the duties concerning San Marco in Negroponte (Orlando 2005: 165, no. 83).

18 On the different typologies of liturgical crosses, see Collareta (2003: 313–15) and Geary (2004).
19 ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126, s.n.. Cf. Orlando (2005: 113–14, 188, no. 132); Koumanoudi (2011: 146–7).
20 The church of San Marco had been the target of some renovation and maintenance in the past decades, as more documents in ASVe attest, such as: ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126, no. 72 (1435, 22 July, Negroponte); ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126, s.n. (1447–49).
21 Bacci (2009b).
22 ASVe, San Giorgio Maggiore, b. 126, s.n. (1454, 19 May, Negroponte).
23 Koder (1973); Kontogiannis (2012).
24 Hedrick and Ergin (2015).
25 ASVe, S. Nicolò di Lido, Pergamene, b. 2 (1231, December, V indiction, Constantinople). The whole text is published in Morozzo della Rocca and Lombardo (eds) (1940, 2: 195–6, no. 658); on the episode recalled here, see also Robbert (1995: 54); Orlando (2005: 147, no. 45). Author's translation.
26 Collareta (2003: 303–28), in particular pp. 313–15, on the function of liturgical implements and their technique, and Geary (2004: 275–90). Although limited to the Romanesque period, also Legner (1985), vols I and III for Western and Byzantine Middle Ages respectively. See also Cordez (2016).
27 Rhaidestos (today's Tekirdağ, Eastern Thrace) lies very close to the Byzantine capital. See s.v. Rhaidestos in: Külzer (2008: 607–13).
28 Bacci (2009a).
29 From the standpoint of economic history, Laiou (1982: 17–18) has recalled that the painters' guilds would introduce in their charters special provisions for objects specifically produced for the Levant.
30 Ballian (2004); also as a useful reference, as regards some specific cases, Hetherington (2008).
31 All the documents and sources that mention art works or liturgical implements, in any establishment in the Venetian quarters of the Levant, are collected in a database (under construction); they are numbered progressively and include, for each document: archival shelf mark, date and place of notarisation, type and content, people mentioned, materials/artefact mentioned, a full transcription and bibliography.
32 To compose Table 9.1, collections of liturgical vessels dating to the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries have been used, which have been mentioned in exhibition and museum catalogues. It is to be noted that, in the pivotal 1974 exhibition held in Venice (*Venezia e Bisanzio*), several Late Byzantine artefacts were exhibited, whose provenance can be related to the Venetian 'quarters' of the Levant. These may help us visualise what is only briefly referred to in the words of the documents.

33 Demus (1960).
34 Hahnloser, Polacco and Volbach (1994); Klein (2010: 196–209). As T.E.A. Dale remarks:

> In refashioning the sacred space of San Marco, the Venetians also recast the sacred commodities of Byzantium according to their own political and religious needs, rooted as much in the ritual practices of the Latin West as in the distant East whence these authoritative objects came to honor St Mark.
>
> (2010: 424)

35 Ibid.
36 Bacci (2014).
37 Delfini Filippi (2004); De Giorgi (2009).
38 Maksimović (1964); Munk (2015). Such cultural absorption had for several centuries also involved the political and social structure of Venice. The offices and titles themselves had been shaped after the Byzantine traditional offices and dignities. On 'Byzantine' offices in Venice, see von Falkenhausen (2013), although focused on an earlier phase of Venetian history; on Byzantine traditions that Venice assimilated, see also Ortalli (2005).

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10 Who is that man?

The perception of Byzantium in fifteenth-century Italy

Andrea Mattiello

One of the most prominent palaces of Florence, the Medici Riccardi Palace, features a room for private devotion on its first floor, known as the Magi chapel. This chapel is decorated on three walls with a monumental frescoed depiction of the so-called *Procession of the Magi*, painted by Benozzo di Lese, better known as Benozzo Gozzoli (Figures 10.1–10.3). This chapter discusses the nature and identity of the main figures in the fresco and analyses some of its details in light of the political and cultural implications of the end of the Byzantine Empire and the dynastic agenda of the Medici as the ruling family of Florence and one of the most influential families of the Italian peninsula during the fifteenth century.

The palace was commissioned by Cosimo de' Medici (1389–1464), known as Cosimo 'the Elder', the *pater patriae* of the family. Originally from the Mugello, the countryside outside of Florence, the family became prominent in Florence in the late fourteenth century, thanks to the banking activity of Cosimo's father, Giovanni di Bicci (1360–1429). Cosimo was responsible for further developing the family business by opening banks in major cities across Italy and Europe, and by securing strong connections with the Roman papal court.[1] As part of a broader attempt to promote the power of his family,[2] Cosimo de' Medici planned the palace as a considerable urban intervention in an area of the city close to the Piazza del Duomo, one of the two centres of Florentine public life, the other being the Piazza della Signoria. It was strategically built over a portion of land previously occupied by several houses at the intersection of Via Larga, nowadays Via Cavour,[3] linking Florence's cathedral to the convent of San Marco with the street leading to the church and monastery of San Lorenzo.[4] The palace, generally attributed to Michelozzo, has also been associated with Brunelleschi,[5] and 'was the chief measure of the Medici presence in Florence, and the family's major opportunity to articulate an identity which was complexly related to the city and its other citizens'.[6] The palace formed a triangle with San Marco and San Lorenzo of urban landmarks that, from this moment onward, became inextricably associated with the power and influence of the Medici family in Florence.[7] The palace and its chapel were completed in 1457, with the decoration of the latter starting in the summer of 1459.[8] The whole project was supervised by Cosimo de' Medici and his son Piero, when Piero's son Lorenzo, later to be known as Lorenzo the Magnificent, was roughly 10 years old.[9]

Figure 10.1 Benozzo Gozzoli, Chapel, Medici Riccardi Palace, *Procession of the Magi*, fresco, east wall, c. 1459, Florence.

At the heart of fifteenth-century Florentine public and religious life, on its most important floor, the *piano nobile*, the Medici Palace had a private devotional space in the very area used for receiving important guests during both private and public events. In his life of Michelozzo, Giorgio Vasari points out that the well-conceived plan of the first floor of the palace, with the careful design of its rooms linked to their formal use, hosted kings, emperors, popes and princes.[10] The position and the design of the chapel in the original layout allowed visitors to transit in its proximity without entering it: after reaching the *piano nobile*, via the main staircase of the palace, visitors could have been invited to enter the reception rooms either directly or by walking through a narrow vestibule in front of the chapel.[11]

Originally the chapel consisted of a squared vestibule with a recess on one side for the altar. The floor plan was transformed when the palace was renovated in the seventeenth century with the shifting towards the inside of the vestibule of portions of the west and south walls. However, the main interior frescoed decoration featuring the *Procession of the Magi* was preserved.[12] If visitors to the original layout entered the chapel and stood in the central square space between the entrance and the recess with the altar, they could see part of the frescoed cycle.
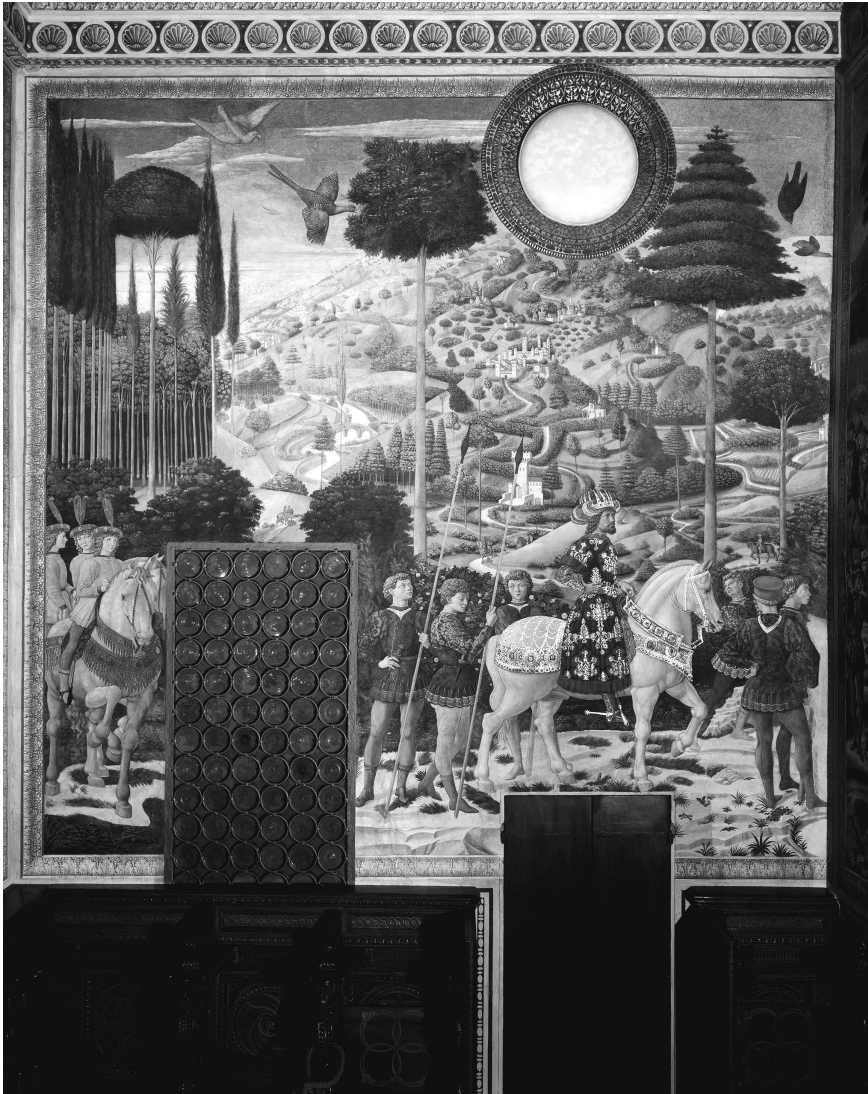
Figure 10.2 Benozzo Gozzoli, Chapel, Medici Riccardi Palace, *Procession of the Magi*, fresco, south wall, c. 1459, Florence.

Source: Photo: Scala Florence, courtesy of the Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo.

Gozzoli decorated the chapel between the summer of 1459 and 1462, when the painter moved to San Gimignano for another commission. We know this by comparing information contained in three letters from Benozzo Gozzoli to Cosimo and Piero, as well as through detailed scientific inspection of the frescoes preliminary to the restoration campaign undertaken in the early 1990s.[13] The fresco of the monumental procession begins on the east wall and proceeds to the south

Figure 10.3 Benozzo Gozzoli, Chapel, Medici Riccardi Palace, *Procession of the Magi*, fresco, west wall, c. 1459, Florence.

Source: Photo: Scala Florence, courtesy of the Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo.

wall and to the west wall. On the north wall, surrounding the altar, is a programme depicting groups of praying angels. Above the altar, on a wood panel, there is a depiction of the scene of the Virgin Mary adoring the infant Christ with St Bernard and St John the Baptist. The painting of the *Adoration of the Infant Christ* in the chapel is a fifteenth-century copy of the original painting by Filippo Lippi that is now in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin.[14]

One of the most striking features of the *Procession of the Magi* is the large number of men accompanying the three major figures of the scene (see Figure 10.1).

This chapter focuses on these figures by reassessing previous scholarship on the fresco by Gozzoli through the lens of the concept of power and authority as experienced in fifteenth-century Florence. This was a time when the role of long-lasting imperial powers both in the East and in the West was being redefined and that culminated with the fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, which marked the end of the direct line of succession of the Emperor of the *Romaioi*, the Greek-speaking Romans of the East.

Due to a set of dynastic alliances that were formed during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries between Italian courts, such as the Acciaiuoli from Florence and Athens, the Tocco from Arta and the Malatesti from Rimini, and courts from satellite states linked to the Byzantine Empire, such as the Morea, the Epiros and the Principality of Achaea, elites in Italian urban centres were looking to the East for political and economic reasons. They were also seeking to gain prestige by association with the Emperor of the *Romaioi*, and with the legacy, history and visual power of the imperial office. This chapter argues that this latter intent on the part of the Medici is portrayed in the chapel's fresco.

Determining the identity of the men portrayed in the fresco by Gozzoli is a pursuit that has involved many scholars over the centuries. The connection between Byzantium and some of the main figures in the scene as well as the many others grouped around them has previously been suggested. Several distinguished art historians have attempted the identification of these portraits, and some have related the painting to the Byzantine world. Early twentieth-century scholarship connected two of the portraits to the Byzantine delegation attending the ecumenical Council of Ferrara-Florence, which was transferred from one city to the other in 1439.[15] In particular, two articles from 1909 read the portraits as actual depictions of members of the Byzantine delegation: Muñoz reads the older Magus as a depiction of Joseph II, Patriarch of Constantinople (see Figure 10.3),[16] while Mengin reads the middle-aged Magus as a portrait of John VIII Palaiologos (see Figure 10.2).[17] These readings are not supported by direct evidence, but have nevertheless been quite successful in establishing this interpretation, to the point that, on the cover of the 2001 catalogue for the exhibition *The City of Mystras*, the middle-aged Magus is featured as if he were John VIII who had travelled from Florence to Mystras.[18]

I wish to explore further the evidence, by cross-referencing and deciphering important details of the iconographic programme, which links the fresco to Byzantium and reveals the interest the Medici had in the Empire of the *Romaioi*.

The family and their bank had a central role across the Italian peninsula and Europe.[19] The Medici were the papal bankers and important cultural promoters at the Pope's as well as in other Italian courts. The patronage of the arts promoted by Cosimo the Elder continued with Piero, his son, and with Lorenzo the Magnificent, his grandson. They supported artists, architects, poets and scholars such as Donatello, Brunelleschi, Michelozzo and Benozzo Gozzoli. Early acts of patronage on the part of Cosimo the Elder were mostly effected in the public sphere, meant as they were to compensate for the sin of usury related to banking activities. For example, Cosimo renovated monastic complexes such as the monastery of San Marco *pro remedio animae suae*. Over time, patronage acts

moved to the private sphere, as was the case for Piero de' Medici, and became an act of self-identification as cultural patron by building a private yet public renowned art collection, as was the case for Lorenzo the Magnificent.[20] Their lavish patronage in Florence, both public and private, is epitomised in the chapel in Via Larga.

During the middle of the fifteenth century, only three private buildings in Florence had a fully functioning private chapel on their premises:[21] the palace of Oliviero di Cerchi, the old palace of Giovanni di Bicci, and the Medici Palace. The chapel in the Medici Palace was originally built to host the portable altar which Pope Martin V had authorised Cosimo the Elder and his wife to use, probably in exchange for Cosimo's assistance to the papal bank.[22] The portable altar was then replaced by an altarpiece by Filippo Lippi in the private chapel of the new palace.[23]

For the Medici family, it was important that the whole city knew that their new palace was equipped with a private devotional place, to reinforce their status among the city elites. In April 1459, Pope Pius II – Enea Silvio Piccolomini – stopped in Florence on his way to Mantua, where he had summoned Italian lords to a council, in an attempt to plan a crusade against Mehmed II. Pius II wrote about his stay in his memoirs, mostly complaining about how the Florentines did not fully support the crusade.[24] Here, the Pope does not mention either the palace or the chapel, but he writes of his personal special guards: the military troops of Galeazzo Maria Sforza, the teenage son of the Duke of Milan, and of Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesti, lord of Rimini,[25] whose cousin, Cleophe, had married Theodore II Palaiologos and lived in Mystras.[26] Other accounts tell us that the Sforza and the Malatesti were hosted in the palace in Via Larga, and visited the still undecorated chapel. Along with cardinals, they attended festivities, a procession and a joust in front of the palace.

Clear indications that some of the frescoed figures are actual portraits are the level of detail and quality of the painted faces, executed with an original mixed technique, using frescoed paint for the flesh, and a mixture of fresco, gouache and oil-based paint for the red caps and for the clothes.[27] Through comparative analysis, Acidini Luchinat recognises Galeazzo Maria Sforza and Sigismondo Malatesti in the painting.[28] She also recognises Cosimo the Elder as the man riding the brown mule, and his son Piero riding the white horse in front of him (see Figure 10.1). Reinforcing this hypothesis, now broadly accepted in the scholarship on Gozzoli, one can notice a series of heraldic elements of the Medici family: the coat of arms with the Medici's globes – the 'palle medicee'; the repetition of the family motto 'SEMPER' on the horse's bridle; and the depiction of the Medici emblem, the ring with a diamond in the embroidered corselet of the horseman standing in front of Piero's horse. Benozzo portrays himself, and identifies his self-portrait by signing 'OPUS BENOTIIS' directly on the rim of the red cap he is wearing. Many attempts have been made to identify those in the group behind as historical figures who passed through Florence either during the ecumenical council or during the visit of Pius II in 1459. Among those tentatively identified are Pope Pius II himself, the philosopher Georgios Gemistos Plethon, and members

of the Medici court, including Lorenzo the Magnificent, his brother Giuliano and their teacher Gentile Becchi.[29]

The three Magi still elude certain identification. They are acknowledged as such by members of the Medici court themselves: Gentile Becchi wrote a verse on a codex dated around 1479, stating that in Cosimo's chapel there are 'in the first part the Magi', in the second, the singing angels, and, in the third, Mary adoring the newborn.[30] Becchi was also an advisor to the Compagnia dei Magi, a powerful Florentine lay confraternity directly supported by the Medici. The confraternity met at the monastery of San Marco and was responsible for organising public processions for the celebration of the Epiphany in the streets of Florence.[31] The three Magi are the largest figures in the fresco; they ride on richly adorned mounts and wear crowns; and they are dressed in the most elaborate costumes, rendered by Gozzoli with great attention to detail, at the direct request of his patrons. Each Magus is preceded and followed by *paggi* wearing matching costumes. To reinforce their identity, two are preceded by horsemen bearing gifts. They are presented as wise men, scientists and doctors, 'medici' in Italian, as well as kings coming from the Orient. It is a very unique rendition of this iconographic subject. It differs from more traditional ones, as well as from contemporary depictions of the same subject such as the *Adoration of the Magi* painted by Gentile da Fabriano in 1423 for what is now the sacristy of Santa Trinita. This was conceived as a private chapel for the Strozzi family, then rivals to the Medici, but the three kings, while richly presented, do not match the grandiosity of those depicted in the Medici chapel.[32] Similarly, the Magi do not resemble those in the *Adoration of the Magi* also commissioned during the 1440s by Cosimo de' Medici from Beato Angelico for one of the dormitory cells in the monastery of San Marco. Gozzoli also worked with Angelico.[33]

The peculiarity of the fresco in the Medici Palace is revealed in particular in some of the details with which the Magi are presented. We will consider two of them. First, two of the Magi are clearly portrayed using Roman imperial equestrian iconography (see Figures 10.2, 10.3). Gozzoli spent time in Rome immediately before returning to Florence for this commission. In Rome, he drafted a drawing, now in the collection of the British Museum, with a rendition of one of the Dioscuri currently in front of the Quirinale Palace.[34] Around this time, Roman imperial equestrian statues were used as models for both statues and paintings of *condottieri* or mercenary captains: for example, in 1436, Paolo Uccello painted a mural in Florence cathedral depicting the English John Hawkwood,[35] while shortly afterwards Donatello produced an equestrian monument for Gattamelata in Padua (1447–53).[36] Gozzoli's depiction of the two Magi uses similar imperial Roman models.[37]

A second, important attribute used in the depiction of the Magi is the typology of crown they are wearing. Each of them wears a headpiece composed of two main elements: a hat in different shapes and fabrics, and a radiant gold and gem-studded crown. This iconography of the crown, in the context of the Roman world, is associated with the cult of the *Sol Invictus*,[38] and was later sometimes used to portray the figure of the emperor as Augustus-Sol. This iconography was also a well-known typology at the time when the chapel in the Palazzo Medici was

decorated. In the gem collection of the Medici family there are several imperial Roman portraits.[39] From the 1456 inventory of the collection of Piero de' Medici one can find a carnelian engraved with the portrait of Hadrian, a chalcedony with Trajan and a cameo with Vespasian.[40] The larger collection assembled by Cosimo's son and grandson includes two chalcedony cameos with two imperial portraits, one identified as Augustus, with the radiant crown (Figure 10.4).[41]

Figure 10.4 Head of Augustus with radiant crown, sardonic cameo, 1.4 x1.1 cm, Le gemme dei Medici e dei Lorena, Museo Archeologico (inv. N. 14524), Florence.

Source: Photo: courtesy of the Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo.

The iconography was understood to identify political supremacy, leadership, power and authority by the Medici. It is no coincidence that in 1574 Cosimo I de' Medici, the first Grand Duke of Tuscany, following a tradition initiated by his ancestor Cosimo the Elder,[42] commissioned a cameo with the portrait of his wife, Eleonora of Toledo, and of himself with the radiant crown (Figure 10.5).[43] This depiction appropriates Roman imperial iconography, applying it to the Medici dynasty – an appropriation that becomes clear when comparing this sixteenth-century cameo with ancient ones, such as the third-century one portraying Settimius Severus and his wife Julia Domna, now in the collection of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.[44] Cosimo the Elder and his son Piero did not dare use a similar iconography in public, but in the privacy of their own chapel they represented themselves as followers of the Magi shown as imperial Roman figures, in the same Roman allegory of authority, along with leaders such as the Sforza and the Malatesti.

Figure 10.5 Domenico Compagni detto Domenico de' Cammei, Busts of Cosimo I de' Medici and of Eleonora of Toledo, agate cameo, 1574, Le gemme dei Medici, Museo degli Argenti (gemme 1921, n. 115), Florence.

Source: Photo: courtesy of the Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo.

But in this depiction of the Magi are also embedded references to another layer of dynastic legitimisation, which allude to another contemporary figure, that of John VIII Palaiologos. When Gozzoli was executing the frescoes, Pope Pius II's plans for a crusade revived in the context of Italian courts, such as that of the Medici, an interest in the Council of Ferrara-Florence and a general preoccupation with the Turks who had conquered Constantinople. The Council of Florence was important for the Medici. Not only did the Medici bank make the transfer of the Council from Ferrara to Florence possible, but Cosimo had a direct influence in the process, having been elected *Gonfaloniere* of Justice – that is, head of the city government – on 29 December 1438. The central role of the Medici in the ecumenical council and the relevance of the debate on the crusade of Pius II converged in the decoration plan of the Medici family chapel. These are all elements that point to the historical figure of John VIII Palaiologos.[45] He was certainly known in Florence since he had visited the city in the fifteenth century for the purpose of attending the ecumenical council, and was the only 'Emperor of the Romans' who stayed there, with his court making a strong impression on the attendants to the council, such as Vespasiano da Bisticci, who, in his *Lives of Illustrious Men of the Fifteenth Century*,[46] described the impression the imperial delegation made on him, for he believed its members to be dressed like the ancient Greeks.[47]

Thus, we can argue that, while representing the Magi, Gozzoli merged the family history of the Medici with evangelical narration, recent historical events and characters connecting the Florentine Republic, the Papacy and the Byzantine Empire. The Byzantine Empire was alluded to through the type of portrait chosen to depict the middle-aged Magus. It is not possible to demonstrate conclusively that this is John VIII Palaiologos, but Gozzoli's intentions in this portrait are clear: this man is a ruler wearing the crown of the *Sol Invictus*, and his facial traits, in the context of fifteenth-century Italian art, refer directly to the Byzantine emperor who visited Florence for the council. Benozzo Gozzoli could have directly witnessed the Byzantine delegation at the Council of Florence, as he was already active in Florence in 1439.[48] But in realising the portrait of John VIII he drew on what was at that point an established iconographic tradition in Italy, and certainly a very established one in the papal court of Rome and at the Medici court in Florence. In fact, the only direct depiction we have of John VIII is a black chalk drawing by Pisanello drafted on an earlier drawing by him, now lost, dating to 1438–39.[49] This portrait was executed at the council along with other ones, and was used by Pisanello to produce a commemorative medal for John VIII.[50] The Pisanello portrait, along with the 1439 bronze bust by Filarete or Donatello,[51] now in the Vatican Museums, initiated a long tradition of portraits. Also by Filarete are the portraits of John VIII while at the council, shown on the bronze doors of St Peter's in Rome.[52] In these, the emperor is shown several times, at various moments of his visit to Italy. In particular, there are details in which he is shown with other members of the delegation on foot or on a horse. The composition reminds us of the fresco by Gozzoli. These portraits of John VIII, representing him during his Italian visit, also engendered an

image that embodies the generic idea of a Byzantine emperor or eastern ruler: such are the portrait of Constantine the Great in the 1454–58 fresco of the *Battle on the Milvian Bridge* by Piero della Francesca in the church of San Francesco in Arezzo,[53] and the representation of Sisygambis the mother of Darius, by the workshop of Apollonio di Giovanni on a wooden panel decorating the front of a *cassone* with the depiction of *Darius Marching to the Battle of Issus* in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.[54] A demonstration of how widely this iconography had been disseminated is offered by a manuscript held today in the monastery of Saint Catherine in Sinai. The codex 2123 at folio 30*v* shows a portrait of John VIII Palaiologos which is very similar to Pisanello's drawing.[55] The portrait is pasted on the codex and is believed to be linked to Pisanello's missing portrait of John VIII.[56]

In conclusion, the choice of representing the Magus in this way supports the idea that the Medici family were attempting to portray themselves as ancient Roman rulers by association with the Palaiologoi, the last imperial dynasty of the *Romaioi*. The fresco was realised under the direct supervision of the Medici over the work of Benozzo Gozzoli,[57] at a time when the Turks had already taken Constantinople. However, the emperor is still seen as a figure of regal significance, a powerful dynastic sovereign, an expression of power rather than of decline. The Medici's association with the imperial legacy, represented by the choice of such iconography, is also supported by their parallel commitment to promoting the Greek language, which the Medici pursued by acquiring Greek codices for their Biblioteca Laurenziana and by hosting Greek teachers, such as Manuel Chrysoloras and others. These associations were essential to the Medici, as they allowed them to appropriate the legacy of a political and cultural entity, which was not perceived as declining, but rather as the foundation for their rule and the promotion of knowledge and statesmanship.

Notes

1 For a survey of primary and secondary sources on the Medici family and their banking activities, see Fulton (2006), especially pp. IX–XXIV. On Cosimo de' Medici, see, in general, Ames-Lewis (1992).
2 The most comprehensive study of the lavish patronage of Cosimo de' Medici is Kent (2000a).
3 Saalman and Mattox (1985).
4 The vast bibliography on the Medici Riccardi Palace includes Hyman (1975; 1977); Preyer (1990); Kent (2000b).
5 Preyer (1990), especially pp. 67–9.
6 Kent (2000b: 225).
7 Elam (1990).
8 Acidini Luchinat (1993); Cole Ahl (1996), especially pp. 81–119.
9 Hatfield (1992).
10 According to Vasari (1568, III: 232):

> E sopra ciascun piano sono abitazioni e appartamenti per una famiglia, con tutte quelle commodità che possono bastare nonché a un cittadino privato com'era allora Cosimo, ma a qualsivoglia splendidissimo et onoratissimo re, onde a' tempi nostri

vi sono allog[g]iati commodamente re, imperatori, papi e quanti illustrissimi prin-
cipi sono in Europa, con infinita lode così della magnificenza di Cosimo come della
eccellente virtù di Michelozzo nella architettura.

11 For a discussion of the two entrances to the narrow vestibule in front of the chapel and
the inscription once located above the door connecting the vestibule to the corridor
with the staircase giving access to the *piano nobile*, see Caglioti (1995: 29). The floor
plan of the *piano nobile* before the seventeenth-century transformation can be seen
in Saalman and Mattox (1985: 331), Figure 5. For an early discussion of the original
layout of plans of Palazzo Medici Riccardi, see Bulst (1970).
12 Bulst (1990).
13 Cole Ahl (1996), especially p. 81.
14 On the painting by Filippo Lippi and its copy, see Acidini Luchinat (1990), espe-
cially pp. 84–5; Ruda (1993), especially p. 447; Cole Ahl (1996), especially pp. 85–6
and n. 42.
15 On the literature and the problematic reading of the identities of the individuals
depicted in the fresco in the Medici Riccardi chapel, and the possible association
between the figures in the fresco and members of the Council of Ferrara-Florence, see
Acidini Luchinat (1990: 85–6; 1993: 363–70); Cole Ahl (1996: 88–98); Crum (1996:
403 n. 1).
16 Muñoz (1909).
17 Mengin (1909).
18 *The City of Mystras*, 2001.
19 With its central bank in Florence, the Medici family's financial enterprise had offices
and activities in several cities all around Europe. But the centrality of Florence in the
Italian peninsula of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and in the Mediterra-
nean was not only financial. It was also political and cultural and, thanks to Cosimo's
patronage, it played an important role in the promotion of the arts. See Jurdjević (1999:
1008–15).
20 The inscription of Lorenzo's name on objects of his collection was an act of private
and direct association of the patron as recognisable public collector. See, for instance,
the inscription of his name on the carnelian he acquired in Venice in 1487. The gem is
now in the Archaeological Museum in Naples. Dioskourides (attr.), *Apollo, Marsia e
Olimpo*, end of the first century BCE – beginning first century CE., carnelian, 40.2 ×
34 mm, Napoli, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 26051. See Farbaky and Pócs
(2013: 208–9).
21 Only two other examples are known in Florence: one chapel in the palace of Oliviero
di Cerchi, known from his will signed on 30 August 1291, and the other one in the
palace of Giovanni di Bicci, built in 1422. See Cole Ahl (1996: 83 n. 28).
22 Ibid.: 83–5.
23 Ibid.: 85–6.
24 See Crum (1996).
25 On the visit of Pius II to Florence in 1459, see Cardini (1991), especially pp. 11–17;
Cole Ahl (1996), especially p. 83 and n. 22.
26 Ronchey (2000).
27 Acidini Luchinat (1993), especially pp. 371–81.
28 Ibid.: 363–70.
29 On Becchi's connection with the Medici family and as teacher of Lorenzo and Giuliano,
see Caglioti (1995: 22–31; 2000: I, 57–80).
30 Cole Ahl (1996: 88).
31 Ibid.
32 On Gentile da Fabriano, see, in general, Christiansen (1982); De Marchi Laureati, L.,
Mochi Onori, L. (2006); Laureati and Mochi Onori (2006).

33 The bibliography on Beato Angelico's frescoes in the San Marco convent in Florence includes Dini and Bonsanti (1986); Hood (1993); Gerbron (2012) and Verdon (2015: 266–77).

34 See www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details. aspx?objectId=717603&partId=1&searchText=gozzoli&page=1 (accessed 18 April 2018).

35 Wegener (1993: 135–6).

36 Bergstein (2002: 862–5).

37 For a discussion of the transposition of classical equestrian sculptural models into paintings, see Israëls (2013: 153–7).

38 On the cult of *Sol Invictus*, see, in general, Halsberghe (1972).

39 The collection was initiated by Cosimo the Elder and subsequently developed by his son Piero, and expanded significantly by his grandson Lorenzo. On the Medici's gems collection, see Dacos, Giuliano and Pannuti (1973); Giuliano and Micheli (1989); Tondo and Vanni (1990); Gennaioli (2007). Examples of the iconographic type of the *Sol Invictus* can be found recorded in drawings, statues, reliefs, gems, pottery, medals and coins. See LIMC (1988–1999: IV 1, 592–625). For the Emperor-Sol and the radiant crown, see especially Ibid. (IV 1, 621–2).

40 See the 1456 inventory of Piero de Medici as presented in Dacos, Giuliano and Pannuti (1973: 87).

41 On the interest in the depiction of ancient emperors and empresses in Florence in the fifteenth century, see Caglioti (2008).

42 See the mid-fifteenth-century cameo with Cosimo the Elder in the Museo degli Argenti, Florence, inv. Gemme (1921, n. 211). See Gennaioli (2007: 100), Plate V, cat. n. 211.

43 See Gennaioli (2007: 108), Plate XIII, cat. n. 261, pp. 269–70.

44 See 'Camée', n.d.

45 The reading of the middle-aged Magus as John VIII has been disputed by scholars, in particular, Ernst Gombrich. See Gombrich (1960). More recently, it has been rehabilitated, among others, by Roger Crum, who has contributed a convincing reading of the fresco in this sense. See Crum (1996), especially pp. 412–13.

46 da Bisticci (1859).

47 See the 'Life of Pope Eugenius IV', in ibid.: 14–15.

48 His earliest attested commission is an *Ascension of Christ* dating to 1439, which is now lost.

49 On the drawings by Pisanello at the Council of Ferrara-Florence, see Vickers (1978); Evans (2004: 527–32), cat. nn. 318A, 318B, and ibid.: 532–4, cat. n. 319.

50 On John VIII Palaiologos' commemorative medal, see Rugolo (1996), especially pp. 144–6.

51 For a description and secondary literature on the bronze bust of John VIII Palaiologos in the Vatican Museums, see Evans (2004: 534), cat. n. 320.

52 Glass (2012).

53 Bertelli (1991: 79–113); Lightbown (1992: 151–5); Bertelli and Maetzke (2001).

54 Callmann (1974), especially 46–7, 70–1, cat. n. 42 and Plate 186. For the panel, see also 'Darius Marching to the Battle of Issus, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (SK-A-3999)', n.d.

55 Jacoby (2006: 31). For a reproduction of the fol. 30*v* with the portrait of Emperor John VIII Palaiologos in the Cod. 2123 – Library of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai – see Evans (2004: 533), Figure 319.1.

56 Restle (1972). Another significant portrait of Emperor John VIII Palaiologos attributed to Pisanello is in the Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques, Cabinet des Dessins, Fonds des dessins et miniatures, inv. 2478r, see Evans (2004: 532–4), Figure 319.

57 This is demonstrated by the letters exchanged between Piero de' Medici, Benozzo Gozzoli and Roberto Martelli in July 1459 about the 'appropriate' depiction of angels in the chapel. See Settis (2010), especially pp. 80–2.

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11   The story behind the image

The literary patronage of Tsar Ivan Alexander of Bulgaria between ostentation and decline

Lilyana Yordanova

In 1331, the despot of Lovech Ivan Alexander (†1371) ascended the Bulgarian throne. Since the second half of the twentieth century scholarship has given him the aura of the most illustrious patron of the arts of the Second Bulgarian Tsardom (1185–1396). Nevertheless, it also holds him responsible for the state's demise at the end of the fourteenth century.[1] How to reconcile these controversial apprehensions has been the subject of a debate that has not yet reached a satisfactory conclusion. Did the Bulgarian ruler consciously employ art to conceal decline or did art flourish despite decline? In what follows, we shall argue that Ivan Alexander did not in fact perceive his reign as decay, nor did artistic production under his patronage remain isolated from the political, military and dynastic struggles of the mid-fourteenth-century Byzantine world. By focusing on the most lavishly illustrated manuscripts he commissioned – the Bulgarian edition of the *Historical Synopsis* of Constantine Manasses (1345–49)[2] and the London Tetraevangelion (1355–56),[3] we ask what the outcome was of introducing contemporary events into the fabric of visual and written narrative. How did the expression of political thought develop in the years that separate the two codices? Three points will be addressed in this respect: (1) the alleged contradiction between the ruler's image and his actions; (2) family tensions; and (3) the elaboration of his memory and its reception in the first centuries after the fall of the Tsardom. The present study draws upon Cecily Hilsdale's seminal work on the agency of Late Byzantine art[4] and will offer an alternative approach to two of the most extensively studied Bulgarian medieval manuscripts.[5]

The weak ruler

Ivan Alexander's visual and textual presence in the Tsardom, expressed through portraits on church walls,[6] manuscript colophons,[7] dedicatory inscriptions,[8] donation charters,[9] and silver and copper coins, the minting of which reached a peak during his reign,[10] testifies to a careful elaboration of his public image. This omnipresence has raised doubts about the real power exercised by the tsar, however.[11]

In the mid-1340s, Bulgarian territory expanded mainly through diplomacy, not warfare. Civil war in Byzantium between John Kantakuzenos (r. 1347–54) and the Empress Anne of Savoy, who acted as regent for the underage John V

Palaiologos (r. 1341–91), was coming to an end.[12] The Serbian ruler Stefan Dušan was crowned Emperor in 1346 with the consent, freely given or not, of Tărnovo.[13] Produced during the same period, the illustrated translation of Manasses' Chronicle engages with these contemporary events.

The original historic narrative finishes with the reign of Emperor Nikephoros III Botaniates (r. 1078–81). It was supplemented by 28 passages on Bulgarian and Byzantine relations, the Tale of the Fall of Troy, and 69 miniatures, five of which depict Ivan Alexander or members of his family.[14] The first miniature on fol. 1v bears a caption which underlines that the tsar of the Bulgarians *and the Greeks* is portrayed (Figure 11.1). Crowned by an angel and dressed in imperial costume, Ivan Alexander stands between the author Manasses and Christ 'the Tsar of tsars', who both hold an open scroll. While facing the ruler, Christ writes on his scroll, 'Whoever follows in my steps, shall be saved' (John 8:12).[15] The text on Manasses' scroll is badly damaged, but it is thought to contain the translated title of the *Historical Synopsis*.[16] Despite other hypotheses,[17] the composition strongly recalls images with two allegories framing King David, a model for rulers who are valiant and successful in warfare, but who also encourage literary activity. Such a miniature can be seen in the tenth-century Paris Psalter (Paris, National Library, Gr. 139). Copies of it dating from the late thirteenth to early fourteenth century show that the image remained meaningful.[18] Both Christ and Manasses have haloes, wear antique clothes and stand in *contrapposto*. Just like allegorical figures, they emphasise the tsar's virtues – righteousness and eclectic literary patronage. This visual discourse is all the more meaningful if we consider Ivan Alexander's hostility towards the usurper of the Byzantine throne, John Kantakuzenos,[19] or towards his own brother-in-law, Stefan Dušan, who had pretensions to the title 'Tsar of the Greeks'.[20] This formulation was adopted for the first time in 1230 by the Bulgarian Tsar Ivan II Asen (r. 1218–41) in a period when the Second Tsardom's territory expanded exponentially and appetites to conquer Constantinople arose.[21] It then had a strong military connotation. Military prowess still constituted an important part of Ivan Alexander's understanding of imperial virtues, as can be gathered from his portrait in front of King David on fol. 91v where he is being handed a sword, or the preceding encomium on fol. 91r.[22] Nevertheless, being Tsar of the Greeks in the mid-1340s also meant cultural affiliation. Translating Manasses might have been a question of literary taste, since the chronicle was quite popular at the time, but was also a deliberate intertwining of Byzantine and Bulgarian history. This is expressed concisely in the miniature on fol. 1v and reflects the conception of the entire manuscript which updates its source by incorporating iconographical and textual additions. Bulgarian ties to the Byzantine Empire were shown as stronger and on equal terms (tsar to emperor), unlike those of Serbia.[23]

The line of world history comprising the parallel existence of Byzantium and the First Tsardom is linked to Ivan Alexander through the last Bulgarian addition on fol. 186v. The text is translated as follows: 'From the time of this tsar [Samuel] the Bulgarian Tsardom was under the power of the Greeks until Asen the First, Tsar of the Bulgarians.'[24] The addition works together with the depictions of Ivan Alexander, but even more so with his encomium on fol. 91r, which acclaims him as a descendant of Ivan I Asen (r. 1190?–95/96), restorer of the

Figure 11.1 Tsar Ivan Alexander with Christ and Manasses. Bulgarian edition of Constantine Manasses' Chronicle, Vatican Library, Cod. Slavo 2, 1345–1349, fol. 1v.

Source: Filov (1927, figure XLI).

state and founder of the Asenid dynasty. Thus, the narrative culminates with the fourteenth-century ruler who, despite previous conflicts, unites Bulgarians and Greeks through literary patronage and particularly through culture.[25] Nothing is known of the audience the manuscript was intended for, but it is tempting to imagine Stefan Dušan's astonished reaction upon receiving such a diplomatic

gift or the relief of Ivan Alexander's Slavonic-speaking Wallachian allies when turning the pages.

Like the illustrated Manasses' Chronicle, the London Tetraevangelion was translated from a Greek manuscript in 1355–56.[26] The model may have been the eleventh-century Paris Gr. 74 itself or a closely related codex, but it should be noted that the Tetraevangelion has far more imposing dimensions than its supposed prototype.[27] It also constitutes the last known manuscript commission by the tsar who is celebrated through a colophon, a magic square, and 367 miniatures in gold paint. There are six portraits of Ivan Alexander, four of which are set at the end of each Gospel. The Bulgarian ruler is depicted larger than any other figure, even Christ in the Last Judgement scene, with the sole exception of his patron St John the Evangelist on fol. 272v.[28] Scale and iconographic choices seem to be the means of stressing God's preference for Ivan Alexander and the latter's genuine orthodoxy in the aftermath of John Kantakuzenos' abdication in 1354 and the death of Stefan Dušan in December 1355. Dušan was in fact excommunicated in 1350 by the ecumenical Patriarch Kallistos.[29] The colophon of a contemporary manuscript, the Gospels of the Serbian hierarch, Jacob of Serres, copied in 1354–1355, hints at the rigorous ideological competition between the Serbian and Bulgarian rulers.[30] Both are praised for their noble birth, and described as pious, grand, *autokrators*[31] of their respective people and the Greeks, with Ivan Alexander being proclaimed a new Constantine and even a new Helen (!). The rivalry also extends rhetorically to their wives and sons.

In the final lines of the London Tetraevangelion's colophon, a request for Ivan Alexander's victory over his enemies is expressed. This introduces a new perspective into the manuscript's agenda. In the Manasses' Chronicle, the tsar was pious and triumphant, whereas here he pleads for military success as a reward for his piety. In the 1350s, Turkish mercenaries penetrated as far as Tărnovo into Bulgarian territory.[32] Thrace had been sacked regularly since the Byzantine civil war.[33] By 1355, the Turks had already killed two of Ivan Alexander's sons.[34]

The codices offer a visual and written response to the challenge to the Bulgarian imperial title and to the military ineffectiveness faced by Ivan Alexander. Invested with the power to act upon such injustice, they voice the ruler's political agenda and mirror the adjustment of his public image to new circumstances.

Family affairs

The tsar's inability to reconcile the members of his family has been considered another reason for the Ottoman conquest of 1396, since the state was divided between two of his sons – Sratsimir and Shishman.[35] Ivan Alexander's children had been systematically mentioned in manuscript commissions since the time he was still a despot.[36] As the deterioration of family relations is said to be expressed precisely in the books that interest us here, we shall carefully re-examine their portraits.[37]

In the Chronicle, the scene representing the funeral of Ivan IV Asen, the ruler's youngest son,[38] combines family portrait with the iconography of the Dormition of the Virgin to emphasise the hagiographic dimension of the tragic event

(fol. 2r). The composition comprises three different groups of figures. Men stand to the left. The Patriarch of Tărnovo is depicted in the foreground next to Ivan Alexander. They are accompanied by the tsar's son and co-ruler Michael and the other clergy who participated in the funeral. Women are placed in the middle, behind the deathbed, with the Tsarina Theodora and the deceased's widow Maria-Irina weeping at the front, while the sisters Kera Thamara and Keratsa[39] are placed at the back. To the right an angel comes to collect Ivan Asen's soul and send it to heaven where the soul is carefully held by the Hand of God. The image also offers a visual echo to the prayers of the funeral service in which God is usually asked to console the mourning and to let his sleeping servant rest in a place of refreshment.[40] According to various canons, an angel of God must take the soul of the deceased to the tribunal of Christ.[41]

The dynastic portrait on fol. 205r is limited to Ivan Alexander, his three sons and an angel who puts his hand on the late Ivan Asen's shoulder. Even though all three sons are individually labelled as co-rulers, only Michael, the first-born and first-crowned, wears a red *sakkos*[42] and stands on a red *suppedion*[43] like his father and in accordance with the Byzantine paradigm. The selection of figures in this image and the articulation of the miniatures around a ruler in general enable us to recognise a masculine overtone in the Chronicle's programme. Women are restricted to the funeral sphere. Thus, the manuscript brings to the fore the existence of male heirs to the throne, but also that supreme power still belonged to Ivan Alexander.

In the London Tetraevangelion, Ivan Alexander is portrayed with his new wife Theodora II and their two sons (fol. 2v–3r; Figure 11.2). The elder, Shishman, had already been proclaimed co-ruler, as suggested by his imperial costume.[44] Sratsimir, the tsar's only surviving son from his first marriage, is missing as he wished to rule separately.[45] More curiously, Ivan Alexander's daughters take a prominent place in the dynastic portrait (Figure 11.3). Kera Thamara is depicted with her husband the Bulgarian despot Constantine.[46] Contrary to the usual practice,[47] the tsar had arranged an internal alliance for her which may have helped his interior policies. The other daughters, Keratsa and Desislava – probably born to Theodora II,[48] were still waiting for husbands. Although Desislava's fate is unknown, it is highly possible that when the miniature was painted Keratsa was already betrothed to Andronicus IV, the son of Emperor John V, in 1355.[49] This is also suggested by Keratsa's red dress and green mantle which are identical in colour to the imperial attire of Tsarina Theodora II. In comparison, the lower despotic status of Kera Thamara, her husband Constantine, and the fifth and youngest son of Ivan Alexander, who was named Ivan Asen after his late brother, is conveyed by their garments dominated by brown hues. The purpose of the marriage between the Bulgarian princess and Andronicus IV was to secure a coalition with Byzantium against the Ottoman threat.[50]

If in the first manuscript Ivan Alexander celebrated his male heirs so as to ensure the lineage of tsars of the Bulgarians and the Greeks, in the second manuscript he also associates his daughters to the maintenance of rulership. It is perhaps because of Sratsimir's separatist tendencies that his father's later commission stresses through the opening portrait the importance of family union in securing Bulgarian imperial power.

Figure 11.2 Family portrait of Tsar Ivan Alexander, Tsarina Theodora II, Tsar Ivan Shish-
man and Ivan Asen. London Tetraevangelion, British Library, 1355–1356.

Source: © British Library Board, Add. Ms. 39627, fol. 3r.

Memory and levels of reading

It is worth examining the subsequent fate of the manuscripts in order to evaluate
the reception of Ivan Alexander's memory and the extent to which the ideological
and dynastic implications of the narrative were understood soon after the fall of
the Tsardom.

The Manasses' Chronicle arrived in Rome probably in the last years of the
fourteenth century, while the Tetraevangelion was taken to Moldavia in the first

Figure 11.3 Family portrait of Tsar Ivan Alexander. Despot Constantine, Kera Thamara, Keratsa and Desislava, London Tetraevangelion, British Library, 1355–56.

Source: © British Library Board, Add. Ms. 39627, fol. 2v.

half of the fifteenth century. The Chronicle was accessible in one of the public rooms of the Vatican library from 1475.[51] Latin glosses were added at the end of the fourteenth and during the fifteenth centuries.[52] They indicate that the glossators did not always understand the meaning of the miniatures. One of the two Latin inscriptions on fol. 1v offers a poignant example in this respect. It identifies Ivan Alexander as a saint of Macedonian origin who wished to have the book translated from Greek to Slavonic.[53] The funeral of Ivan IV Asen was mistaken for that of Ivan Alexander. This underlines the strong hagiographical charge of the portraits, which was reinforced later in the Tetraevangelion, but also attests to the

misinterpretation of ideological images in a milieu which was neither Byzantine nor Slavic.

By contrast, the London codex served as an important visual source of inspiration in the young principality of Moldavia. Founded in 1359,[54] Moldavia sheltered Bulgarian intellectuals who boosted its cultural production.[55] Hence, part of the Tsardom's clergy founded the Neamţ monastery, endowed eventually by Voivod Alexander the Good (r. 1402–32),[56] who also purchased Ivan Alexander's Tetraevangelion.[57] The acquisition of the book indicates that the voivod wished to preserve the tsar's memory. Also, Alexander the Good may have sought an alignment with his namesake's imperial virtues as a way of claiming prestigious ancestry. In the princely commissions executed by the copyists at Neamţ from the fifteenth century onward, the strategy of honouring the patron at the end of each Gospel attested in the London codex, was reinterpreted by replacing the portrait of the commissioner with a cartouche containing an identical dedicatory text. Thus, the scribes created a new decorative trend which can be observed in the manuscripts Canonici Gr. 122 and M 694,[58] but this issue needs to be further addressed in a separate publication.

In the mid-sixteenth century, Moldavian rulers were in search of identity and ideology in the Western, Slavic and Byzantine spheres.[59] They took particular interest in the so-called *Mirror of Princes*.[60] It was in this context that the Voivod Ioan Alexander II Mircea (r. 1568–77) commissioned a copy of the Bulgarian manuscript – the Gospels Suceviţa 23.[61] Four miniatures with the Bulgarian tsar were revisited.[62] Dynastic and donor portraits were conflated into one composition. The effigy of Ivan Alexander was replaced by those of Alexander II and his son Mihnea in the scene where Mathew blesses the ruler, alluding to the eternal divine protection that currently sheltered Alexander II and Mihnea (fol. 97v). In Suceviţa 23, the Moldavian voivod refrained from being portrayed standing between the Virgin and Abraham in the Last Judgement scene, showing less certainty and boldness regarding his admission into Paradise (fol. 141v). Also, Alexander II preferred his heir rather than he himself to receive Luke's blessings for a victorious rule (fol. 238v). The meaning of the last miniature with John the Evangelist was left unchanged (fol. 303v). It is a donor portrait, which seeks to underline the righteousness of the ruler through his protection of literature. Exceptionally, Alexander II borrowed Ivan Alexander's red boots as a symbol of legitimacy as if this had been fully achieved only after copying the Gospels. The two-centuries-old lavish manuscript and the Bulgarian tsar's so cunningly displayed piety, virtues, culture and patronage must have still aroused genuine fascination.[63]

While the conquest of the Tsardom brought the codices to new horizons, they successfully promoted a flattering image of Ivan Alexander either as a saint or a ruler, dissociated from the idea of decline. The reception of the tsar's memory depended on the eyes of the beholder in terms of what he wished to see in the books, and of his proper understanding of the circumstances of their creation. The strategic use of well-established iconographic schemes made the ideological

and dynastic implications of Ivan Alexander's depictions appealing in territories under Byzantine cultural influence.

This study has set out to show that a ruler's effectiveness cannot be measured only by military success and territorial expansion, with a clear line between politics and art. Imperial art is politics, especially in the Late Byzantine period.[64] By embedding historical context in the visual and written narrative, the Manasses' Chronicle and the London Tetraevangelion actively engaged with contemporary events. They were entrusted with the capacity to influence the current situation in favour of Ivan Alexander which confirms that he was anything but a 'passive' and 'disinterested ruler'.[65] Furthermore, the two manuscripts were conceived as lasting monuments, hence their deliberate luxurious execution. As such, they enabled the tsar to redefine and defend his claims over Bulgarians and Greeks in the eyes of readers of different circles and periods. These claims were founded on righteousness, cultural unity with Byzantium, subsequently enriched by the principle of family unity so as to ensure the durability of Bulgarian imperial reign.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 Dujčev (1963a: 13–14); Bozhilov (1985: 149–78); Andreev *et al*. (2012: 241). For a more nuanced opinion of the tsar's reign, see Matanov (2014: 377–89).
2 Vatican Library, Cod. Slavo 2. Digitised version available at: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.slav.2.
3 British Library, Add. Ms. 39627. Digitised version available at: www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_39627_fs001r.
4 Hilsdale (2014).
5 Scholarship on the illustrated Manasses' Chronicle and the London Tetraevangelion has been largely overshadowed by the Byzantine tradition from which they draw inspiration. The articles by Ivan Bozhilov (1996), and Elka Bakalova (2013) are exceptions. These authors believe the miniatures of the Chronicle constitute a pure creation of Bulgarian artists.
6 Church of St Nicholas, Kalotina, 1331–37; ossuary of the Virgin Petritzonitissa monastery, Bachkovo, 1344–64; church of Saints Peter and Paul, Berende, middle or second half of the fourteenth century; church of the Virgin, Ivanovo, second half of the fourteenth century. All are located in present-day Bulgaria.
7 Sofia Psalter, Sofia, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, no. 2, 1337; Gospels, St Petersburg, State Public Library, Gr. CCXXXV, 1337; Visarion's Paterikon, Belgrade, Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Krk 4/I, 1346; German's Miscellany, Bucharest, Romanian patriarchate, no. 1, 1359; Laloe's Apostolos, Mount Athos, Zographou

monastery Id2, 1359; *Divine Ladder*, Museum of the Rila monastery, no. 61, 1364; Sticheron, Athens, National Library, cod. 2607, 1367.

8 Church of St Nicholas, Staničenje (Serbia), 1331–2; church of St Nicholas, Kalotina.

9 Ivan Alexander donated charters to several monasteries: that of the Virgin Eleousa in Mesembria (1341?), the Zographou monastery on Mount Athos (1341), St Nicholas, near Orjahovo (1347), St Nicholas in Emona (1354?), three monasteries in Mesembria (1335, 1350, 1365?).

10 Dochev (2002: 677). Ivan Alexander frequently issued monetary emissions with different iconographies.

11 In the case of Manasses' chronicle, for example, the gallery of Ivan Alexander's portraits has been interpreted as a mark of 'considerable insecurity' (Boeck 2015: 84).

12 Fine (1994: 308).

13 Ibid.: 309. In the mid-1340s, Ivan Alexander probably also faced interior problems. The boyar Balik claimed for himself the major port of Varna and a part of the Tsardom's north-eastern territories (ibid.: 367).

14 These five images consist of a donor portrait at the opening of the book (fol. 1v), a depiction of the funeral of the tsar's son, Ivan Asen (fol. 2r), the latter's admission into Paradise (fol. 2v), a portrait of Ivan Alexander before the prophet David (fol. 91r), and another one with his three sons (fol. 205r).

15 The association between imperial image and the representation of Christ as 'Ruler of rulers' or 'of those who rule' has been found on Byzantine coins since Justinian II (r. 685–95) down to the Middle Byzantine period (see Evans and Wixom 1997: 213–14). It is not typical of later coinage. The panegyric in the Sofia Psalter urges subjects to thank Christ 'Tsar of all' for choosing Ivan Alexander as 'Tsar of tsars' (fol. 311r).

16 Dujčev (1963a, no. 1).

17 Hans Belting and Ioannis Spatharakis believed the striking composition with the off-centre position of Christ was inspired by Byzantine chrysobulls (Spatharakis 1976: 161–2). Axinia Džurova and Vasia Velinova have suggested a comparison with Byzantine imperial portraits in manuscripts, such as the depiction of Nikephoros III Botaniates accompanied by an author and a saintly figure in Paris, National Library of France, Coislin 79, 1078–81 (Džurova and Velinova 2007: 40).

18 See, for example, Ms. Gr. 269 (St Petersburg, National Library, second half of the thirteenth century) and Ms. Vat. Palat. Gr. 381 [B] (Vatican, Vatican Library, ca. 1300); Evans (2004: 265, 273–4).

19 In the summer of 1341, John Kantakuzenos, then a *megas domestikos* (supreme military commander), refused to surrender to Ivan Alexander a certain Shishman, son of the late Tsar Michael III Shishman (r. 1323–30) and possible pretender to the Bulgarian throne. Ivan Alexander then tried to impose his will by making a display of military force. However, he was forced to retreat as the Byzantine army outnumbered the Bulgarian one. During the Byzantine civil war, Ivan Alexander sided with Anna of Savoy, and later declined to form an anti-Ottoman coalition with Kantakuzenos.

20 Despite the peace treaty of 1332 and the marriage alliance between the ruling houses of Bulgaria and Serbia, Ivan Alexander was still displeased with the new claims of his Serbian homologue. As early as 1343, the latter was calling himself King of Serbians and Greeks, then Tsar in two charters issued to Athonite monasteries (Fine 1994: 309). Neither did his imperial pretensions leave Byzantines at peace. The Serbian emperor and the Serbian patriarch were both excommunicated by the patriarch of Constantinople (ibid.: 310). At the outbreak of a new civil war between the Byzantine princes John V Palaiologos and Matthew (the son of John Kantakuzenos), the former was forced to recognise Dušan's title in 1352 in order to obtain his help (ibid.: 325).

21 Ivan II Asen issued a chrysobull in favour of the Vatopedi monastery in April 1230 which bore his signature as Tsar of the Bulgarians and the Greeks. This title was not exclusively used by Ivan II Asen and Ivan Alexander, as Elena Boeck stated (Boeck 2015: 68). Other Bulgarian rulers include Tsar George II Terter (r. 1321–23) as specified

in the colophon of the Tetraevangelion ms. 18 (Mount Athos, Chilandar monastery, 1322); Tsar Ivan Sratsimir (r. 1356–96/97) (see the colophon of the Bdin Miscellany, Ghent, University Library, Slav. Ms. 408, 1360?), and Tsar Ivan Shishman (r. 1371–95) (Rila chrysobull, Rila monastery, 1378, and Vitosha chrysobull, Mount Athos, Zographou monastery, B IV BZ, 1371–82/5).

22 The miniature on fol. 91v shows an angel crowning the Bulgarian tsar and giving him a sword, while the prophet David presents him with an open scroll showing the beginning of Psalm 20: 'The king rejoices in your strength, Lord. How great is his joy in the victories You give.' Hence, the image associates orthodoxy, rulership and military prowess. Comparisons between King David, Ivan Alexander and the victories of the Israelites have been emphasised in manuscripts since the Sofia Psalter. Tsar Simeon (r. 893–927) was the first Bulgarian ruler to seek a parallel with King David so as to justify his pretensions to govern the Byzantines (Nikolov 2011: 157–8, 162), see Biliarsky (2010: 256). Simeon is depicted on three occasions in the illustrated chronicle: on fol. 172v at a banquet given in his honour, and during an assault on Constantinople; on fol. 174r where he sets the church of the Virgin Pege on fire. It is tempting to assume that David was chosen precisely because he constitutes a model for both Byzantine and Bulgarian rulers. For a further discussion of the miniature's iconographic prototypes and meaning in the context of the Second Tsardom, see Spatharakis (1976: 162); Dujčev (1963a: no. 1); Džurova and Velinova (2007: 47–8). As for the encomium on fol. 91r, it praises Ivan Alexander for being a victorious, merciful and light-bearing sovereign, protector of monks and the poor. This text is actually an amended version of an encomium which Manasses addressed to Emperor Manuel I Comnenos (r. 1143–1180) (Spatharakis 1976: 162).

23 An earlier example of the agency of translated Byzantine chronicles is that of John Malalas. According to Angel Nikolov, Malalas' writings served as 'a source of historical precedents' used by Tsar Symeon and his courtiers 'to justify their claims in their negotiations with Byzantium' (Nikolov 2011: 169).

24 Trans. Petkov (2008: 454).

25 For a slightly different interpretation, see Boeck (2015: 85, 111).

26 This information is indicated on fol. 275r.

27 The dimensions of the London Gospels are 33 x 24 cm (275 folios originally), whereas those of Paris Gr. 74 are 25, 5 x 20 cm (215 folios); *Byzance: L'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises* (1992: 354–5).

28 Fol. 3r – dynastic portrait with the tsar (18.4 cm) and his wife (17 cm); fol. 83v – portrait of the tsar (6.5 cm) in front of the Evangelist Matthew (6 cm); fol. 124r – the Last Judgement: Christ (3.8 cm), the Virgin (5.5 cm), Ivan Alexander in heaven (5.8 cm); fol. 134v – the tsar (7.7 cm) before the Evangelist Mark (7.3 cm); fol. 212v – portrait of the tsar (6.8 cm) in front of the Evangelist Luke (6.8 cm); fol. 272v – the tsar (9.3 cm) receiving the Gospel from St John (9.4 cm).

29 Fine (1994: 310).

30 British Library, Add. Ms. 39626. Digitised version available at: www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_39626_fs292v.

31 Independent rulers.

32 Andreev *et al.* (2012: 242).

33 After the battle between John V Palaiologos and John Kantakuzenos (who had sent 10,000 horsemen through his ally Orkhan) near Demotika in October 1352, the Turks plundered Bulgaria (Fine 1994: 325). In 1352 and 1354, Plovdiv, Yambol and the lands around the rivers Tundzha and Maritsa were looted by the Turks (Andreev et al. 2012: 242).

34 The first-born son Michael and Ivan IV Asen (Bozhilov 1985: 195; Andreev *et al.* 2012: 484; Matanov 2014: 412).

35 Andreev *et al.* (2012: 241).

36 See Lovech Miscellany, St Petersburg, Library of the Academy of Sciences, no. 13.3.17, before 1331.

37 Boeck (2007: 14–15).
38 Axinia Džurova, Vasia Velinova and Elena Boeck think Ivan Asen was the first-born son. However, the colophons of the Lovech Miscellany and the Sofia Psalter, the Vatican Manasses's miniatures as well as the monetary emissions of Ivan Alexander and Michael confirm that the latter was the first-born of the brothers. For the coins, see Radushev and Zhekov (1999: 18).
39 They are both wearing a white headdress, but it is impossible to determine which is which.
40 Marinis (2016: 86).
41 Ibid.: 88.
42 Long Late Byzantine imperial tunic in purple, black or white colour, embroidered with gold thread and decorated with pearls and precious stones.
43 Honorific pedestal or cushion placed under the feet of a ruler or those of certain holy figures.
44 Spatharakis (1976: 69); Bakalova (1985: 52).
45 Bozhilov (1985: 203–5); Andreev *et al.* (2012: 280); Boeck (2007: 14).
46 I agree with Ivan Bozhilov that Constantine was of Bulgarian origin (Bozhilov 1985: 215). Otherwise, it is highly doubtful that he would have been portrayed in the manuscript.
47 Bulgarian princesses were normally married off to foreign suitors (see Pavlov 2006: 50–71).
48 Bozhilov (1985: 230, 234); Andreev *et al.* (2012: 245).
49 Bozhilov (1985: 220). Before the end of 1355, a war arose between John V Palaiologos and Matthew Kantakuzenos, who was also crowned Byzantine emperor in April 1353. As John V emerged victorious from this conflict, it seems that Ivan Alexander had made the right decision in giving his daughter's hand to him (Fine 1994: 326–7).
50 Pavlov (2006: 69).
51 Džurova and Velinova (2007: 31).
52 Dujčev (1963b: 28).
53 'S(anctus) Joh(ann)es Alexander Macedo ad cui(us) petitione(m) iste liber fuit t(ra)n slatat(us) d(e) Greco i(n) sclavo(n)ico' (Filov 1927: 30); Dujčev (1963a: no. 1). The other inscription on fol. 1v refers to the book: 'Iste liber appelatur flos o(mn)ium cronicar(um)'. Translation: 'This book is called the flower of all chronicles' (Dujčev 1963a: no. 1).
54 Treptow (1996: 71).
55 A previous Bulgarian translation of the Manasses' Chronicle also found its way to Moldavia. According to Dennis Deletant, the three sixteenth-century Moldavian chronicles of Macarie, Eftimie and Azarie 'lean heavily, from a stylistic point of view, on the fourteenth-century Middle Bulgarian translation of Manasses, borrowing from the latter many rhetorical devices and expressions' (Deletant 1980: 9–10). Gregory Tsamblak, a student of the last Bulgarian Patriarch Euthimios, also spent a part of his ecclesiastical career in Moldavia and helped its bishopric to be recognised by the Patriarch of Constantinople in 1401 (Andreev *et al.* 2012: 155); Treptow (1996: 101–2).
56 Andreev *et al.* (2012: 1550); Ogden (2002: 172).
57 Dimitrova (1994: 21); Bakalova (2012: 353). The subsequent fate of the manuscript is known from a note added on fol. 5r which reads:

> The son of Voivod Stefan, Ioan Alexander, in Christ God faithful Voivod and ruler of the whole land of Moldavia, bought the Gospels which had been deposited in pledge. Let God have mercy upon him and grant him eternal life as well as long life here.
>
> (Dimitrova 1994: 21)

Voivod Stefan is commemorated alongside other Bulgarian, Byzantine and Serbian rulers in the *Boril Synodikon* (trans. Petkov 2008: 261).

58 Canonici gr. 122, now in Oxford's Bodleian Library, was commissioned in 1429 by Marina, Alexander the Good's wife. The Slavonic text is of Bulgarian recension (Turdeanu 1951: 460); Ene d-Vasilescu (2010: 83–4). The ms. M 694 (New York, Morgan Library and Museum) was commissioned in 1492 by the Voivod Stefan the Great (r. 1457–1504).
59 Treptow (1996: 135–7).
60 Treatises offering advice to rulers (Kazhdan *et al.* 1991, vol. II: 1379–80).
61 For the reproduction of the folios mentioned below, see Popescu-Vilcea (1984).
62 The similarities between the London Tetraevangelion and Suceviţa 23 first drew the attention of Serarpie der Nersessian (1927) and Bogdan Filov (1934).
63 Alexander II and Mihnea wear black boots in the other miniatures. However, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Moldavian rulers are portrayed with red shoes, as can be seen in the Humor Gospels (Putna Monastery, 1473), at Humor monastery (1530–35) and at Snagov church (1563).
64 Hilsdale (2014: 337, 342).
65 Bozhilov (1985: 159).

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12 Imperial portraits of the Grand Komnenoi of Trebizond (1204–1461)

Tatiana Bardashova

The Trapezuntine emperors, the Grand Komnenoi, are descended from the imperial dynasty of the Komnenoi,[1] which ruled Byzantium during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Following the fragmentation of the Byzantine Empire in consequence of the Fourth Crusade and the fall of Constantinople in 1204, the Empire of Trebizond became one of the so-called successor states, called 'empires in exile' along with the Empire of Nicaea and the Despotate of Epirus.[2] Keen to substantiate the legitimacy of their claims to the legacy of Byzantium and the title of 'emperor', the Trapezuntine rulers laid particular stress on imperial representation and propaganda, with a special engagement with the visual component.[3]

This chapter discusses all the known examples of imperial portraiture in Trebizond and determines their specific features and possible influences from Byzantium. One of the most interesting examples of the imperial images in Trebizond is a gallery of emperors' portraits in the palace of the Grand Komnenoi in the Citadel (Figure 12.1). From the literary description of Cardinal Bessarion (1403–72),[4] who was born in Trebizond, we know that the portrait gallery was in one of the most beautiful halls of the palace:

> Its floor entirely paved with white marble, while its ceiling shines with the blooms of painting, with gold and various colors. The entire hollow [of the ceiling] gleams with shining stars in imitation of the heavens and exhibits excellence and delicacy of painting. All around, on the walls, is painted the choir of the emperors, both those who have ruled our land [Trebizond] and their ancestors [the Komnenoi in Constantinople]).[5]

One more gallery containing the portraits of the Trapezuntine emperors describes Loukites (ca. 1280 to before 1349),[6] an official at the court of the Trapezuntine emperor Alexios II (1297–1330). Nine days after the death of Alexios II on 3 May 1330,[7] Loukites delivered a memorial speech on his deceased patron. The speech was given in some chamber, where the images of all the emperors of the Komnenoi, who ruled in Constantinople, were displayed on one side and all the Trapezuntine emperors were shown on other.[8] In his memorial speech, Loukites referred to the chamber as a holy precinct (ἱερὸς σηκὸς) twice and meant,[9] as Olaf Rosen has convincingly argued, the cathedral

Figure 12.1 Trebizond. Palace of the Grand Komnenoi in the Citadel (south-west side).

Source: Photo: author.

and the court church of the Grand Komnenoi, the Panagia Chrysokephalos (now the Fatih Mosque).[10]

From the reports of scholars who visited Trebizond in the nineteenth century, we know about an additional gallery with the portraits of the Trapezuntine emperors from Alexios I to Alexios III in the church of St. Eugenios (now the Yeni Cuma Mosque), the patron saint and main protector of Trebizond.[11] These images, lost today, were most likely located on the church's outside west wall[12] or on the church's west walls in the portico.[13] In my opinion, they can be assumed to have been painted simultaneously by order of Alexios III, soon after his coronation in the same church in 1350.[14] This was more probably a reflection of his aspiration to popularise an idea of continuity with the imperial dynasty of the Grand Komnenoi.

In Trebizond, we can see not only imperial galleries showing the chronological succession and sequence of the Grand Komnenoi, of which no parallel is found in Byzantium, but also single images or small group family portraits, of the kind that are far more commonly used for representation of emperors in Byzantium.[15] Most of these portraits have not survived, and, unfortunately, we know of only one original fresco of the Trapezuntine emperors John IV (r. 1429–58) and his father Alexios IV (r. 1417–29) located on the façade of the bell tower about 20 metres to the west of the Hagia Sophia in Trebizond (Figure 12.2).[16] Moreover, nineteenth-century scholars reported the portraits of John II Grand Komnenos, his

Figure 12.2 Trebizond. Bell-tower by the Hagia Sophia.
Source: Photo: author.

wife Eudokia Palaiologina and their son Alexios II in the church of St. Gregory of Nyssa in Trebizond, which could still be seen until 1863.[17]

Several imperial images are known also from late copies. For example, a copy of the fresco with portraits of Alexios III, his wife Theodora Kantak-ouzene, and his mother, Irene, in the Panagia Theoskepastos Monastery

(now Kızlar Monastery) in Trebizond was made by French historian Charles Texier in the nineteenth century (Figure 12.3).[18] Also, we know of a portrait of Manuel I (r. 1238–63) in the Hagia Sophia of Trebizond was copied by the mid-nineteenth-century Russian painter and architect, Grigorii Gagarin (Figure 12.4).[19] One more fresco with images of the Trapezuntine rulers that does not exist today was placed in the famous Monastery of Panagia Theotokos at Soumela, located about 45 km to the south of Trebizond. According to David Talbot Rice's photo (1929), three imperial figures (Alexios III, his son and later emperor of Trebizond Manuel III (r. 1390–1417), as well as his illegitimate son Andronikos) were portrayed in the fresco.[20]

Now we will discuss other media. On the well-known original chrysobull given to the Holy Monastery of Dionysiou on Mount Athos in September 1374, we can see the images of Alexios III (r. 1349–90) and his wife Theodora Kantakouzene.[21] The emperor is dressed in a black *sakkos* and a golden *loros*, and the empress wearing a luxurious red gown with gold double-headed eagles. The imperial couple are portrayed with important attributes such as crowns with pendants, purple shoes and insignias of power (sceptre/labarum, orb). It must be noted that the Trapezuntine emperor's portrait looks very similar to the known images of the Byzantine emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos (r. 1282–1328) on his chrysobulls dated from 1301, 1307 and 1314.[22] Although Andronikos' chrysobulls were made 60 to 70 years earlier than Alexios' golden bulls, we can trace similar stylistic and

Figure 12.3 Trebizond. Panagia Theoskepastos Monastery. Portraits of Alexios III Grand Komnenos, his wife Theodora Kantakouzene (right) and mother Irene (left).

Source: Texier and Pullan (1864: Plate LXVI.)

Figure 12.4 Trebizond. Gagarin's copy of the portrait of Manuel I Grand Komnenos in the Hagia Sophia.

Source: Gagarin (1897, Figure 25).

iconographic elements in images of the Byzantine and Trapezuntine emperors. It can also be supposed that the Trapezuntine emperors were attempting to imitate the Byzantine chrysobull portraits of the Palaiologoi.[23]

The next item to be considered is one of the surviving icons presented by Alexios III to the Monastery of Dionysiou. One of the wings of the diptych icon features the donor emperor alongside John the Baptist, and the other depicts St. Eugenios

in the company of his followers, Kanidios, Valerian and Akylas. Compositionally, Alexios' depiction in the icon is virtually identical to his imperial chrysobull to the Monastery of Dionysiou, mentioned above, and is likely to have been painted by the same artist around the same period.[24] In Byzantium, we know of only one fourteenth-century icon containing imperial portraits:[25] 'the Feast of Orthodoxy', which depict the empress Theodora and her son-emperor Michael III (r. 842–67), as well as an image of the Virgin Hodegetria.[26] As there is only one surviving exemplar from both Trebizond and Byzantium, it is difficult to assert that imperial images on icons were a widespread practice in both empires.

The first page (f. 1r) of a manuscript 'The Romance of Alexander the Great' (Venice Hellenic Institute, codex gr. 5) presents an additional imperial portrait for discussion. It depicts a Trapezuntine emperor – either Alexios II or Alexios III. We know this because the official title of the Trapezuntine emperors ('In Christ God, Faithful Emperor and Autocrat of all the East and Pe(rateia)') used in the fourteenth century, is written on the portrait.[27] It seems to me that the depiction of the Trapezuntine ruler in the codex has, in general, similar elements to the common representation of the Byzantine emperors in the manuscripts. This is in part because the Trapezuntine emperor is depicted wearing the attire of a Byzantine emperor with a *loros* as well as important imperial insignia, such as a crown, red footwear and carrying an orb in his left hand. There are many questions regarding this image, as well as the manuscript itself, however, which would require additional, specialised study.

Unfortunately, we are in possession of only one example of a gold seal belonging to the Trapezuntine emperors. It is preserved on the already mentioned original chrysobull to the Monastery of Dionysiou (1374). The seal was initially hanging, but it broke into two pieces, which were fastened separately by monks at the top of the chrysobull. One side of the seal depicts Christ blessing and holding the Gospel, while the other side depicts the emperor with a sceptre in his right hand and an orb in his left, as the Komnenian emperors were typically portrayed on their gold seals (for instance, all the Palaiologoi hold in their left hand an *akakia*).[28] We know of another lead seal that probably belonged to the first emperor of Trebizond, Alexios I. One side depicts St. George with a ruler; an inscription above the image identifies this ruler as 'Alexios Komnenos' but gives no other information. The other side depicts the resurrection of Christ, a scene that was traditionally used for the seals of high church dignitaries, but not for emperors.[29]

In addition, we can look at coins from Trebizond. The Grand Komnenoi minted silver and copper coins, which normally bore the effigies of St. Eugenios,[30] the patron saint of the Empire of Trebizond, or (in some cases of the Mother of God, Christ or, St. George)[31] on the obverse and that of the Trapezuntine rulers on the reverse. Further, the effigies of St. Eugenios and the Trapezuntine emperors possess important attributes of the Byzantine coin iconography such as a luxurious gown, a golden *loros*, and insignias of power (sceptre/labarum, *globus cruciger*). It is worth noting that, when found on coins dating back to the thirteenth century, the emperors and St. Eugenios are depicted standing full height, but those issued during the reign of Alexios II, nominally starting from the period between the very

late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, feature the emperor and St. Eugenios on horseback.[32] This may have been due to the Eastern influence[33] from the Sultanate of Rum and the Mongol Empire, which is known also to have influenced the Georgian and Armenian coinage.[34] Furthermore, we have coins from Thessaloniki (with St. Demetrios)[35] and Serbia[36] as well as the Byzantine coins minted on orders from John V and John VI Kantakouzenos (probably between 1347 and 1353)[37] and Manuel II Palaiologos (r. 1391–1425), on which the rulers are also depicted on horseback.[38]

To summarise, based on the examples discussed, we can conclude that there was a strong Byzantine influence on the imperial images of the Grand Komnenoi in the Empire of Trebizond. We can also observe, however, some innovations in the visual representation of the Trapezuntine emperors. More particularly, we know of several galleries containing numerous portraits of the Trapezuntine rulers in the palace of the Grand Komnenoi in the Citadel, in the Panagia Chrysokephalos church and in the church of St. Eugenios – an arrangement we do not find in Byzantium. The images of the emperors in these galleries were depicted chronologically, perhaps to demonstrate continuity and the succession of the dynasty of the Grand Komnenoi, as well as to popularise the legitimacy of their rule in the Empire of Trebizond and their rights to the title 'emperor'.

Notes

1 Williams (2006: 171); Vasiliev (1936: 5–9); Fallmerayer (1827: 28–43); Miller ([1926] 1968: 14–15).
2 The names of the states concerned are problematic and are taken to be open questions in modern literature. It would probably be more accurate to say that the states were formed with Nicaea and Thessaloniki as capitals. However, we will take the given names – the Empire of Nicaea, and the Despotate of Epirus – as these are normally used in Byzantine Studies.
3 Bardashova (2015: 79–91).
4 Sideras (1994: 360–1); Zorzi (1994: 1–20); Karpov (2007: 463–4).
5 According to Bessarion (1984: 64):

> ἐκ δὲ γ' ἐπὶ θάτερα μήκει τε μήκιστος οἶκος καὶ κάλλει κάλλιστος παρατέταται, τοὔδαφος μὲν λευκῷ λίθῳ σύμπας ὑπεστρωμένος, χρυσῷ δὲ τὴν ὀροφὴν καὶ ποικιλίᾳ χρωμάτων καὶ τοῖς τῆς γραφῆς καταστραπτόμενος ἄνθεσιν ἄστρα τε προεδείκνυσαν ἐν τῷ ξύμπαντι ἑαυτῆς κύτει καὶ αὐγὰς ἀποπέμπουσαν ὡς ἂν οὐρανοῦ μίμημα καὶ πολλὴν ἐπιδεικνυμένην τῆς γραφῆς περιττότητα καὶ τρυφήν · τά τε κύκλῳ καὶ πρὸς τοῖς τοίχοις αὐτοῖς γέγραπται μὲν ὁ τῶν βασιλέων χορὸς ὅσοι τε τῆς ἡμετέρας ἦρξαν ὅσοις τε προγόνοις ἐχρήσαντο, γέγραπται δὲ καὶ εἴ τινα κίνδυνον ἡ πόλις ἡμῶν περιστάντα διήνεγκε καὶ ὅσοι κατ᾽ αὐτῆς ἐπιόντες καθ᾽ αὑτῶν ἔγνωσαν ἐγχειρίσαντες.

See Bryer and Winfield (1985 vol. 1: 185–6); Oikonomides (1979: 322–3).
6 Rosenqvist (1996: 22–3); Sideras (1994: 283); Karpov (2007: 458–9); Asp-Talwar (2005: 39–50).
7 Panaretos (1958: 64).
8 According to Loukites (1891: 425–6):

> γεννάδαι γὰρ ἄνωθεν Κομνηνοὶ προκύψαντες κράτορες ἡμᾶς ὀνείδεσι βάλλουσι καὶ αὐτοὶ μετασχεῖν τῶν ἴσων ἐθέλουσιν, ἔνθεν μὲν Ἀλέξιος Ἰωάννης Μανουὴλ

καὶ Ἀλέξιος οἱ βασιλικώτατοι, ἐκεῖθεν δ᾽ αὖθις Ἰσαάκιος καὶ Ἰσαάκιος οἱ σεβαστοκράτορες, βασιλεὺς Ἀνδρόνικος ὁ πολὺς καὶ σεβαστοκράτωρ Μανουὴλ ὁ χαρμόσυνος.

9 Ibid.: 421, 429. See Rosenqvist (1993: 295).
10 Ibid.: 294–9.
11 Rosenqvist (1996: 65; 2002: 196); Bryer and Winfield (1985, vol. 1: 223).
12 Fallmerayer (1843, vol. 1: 125); Millet (1895: 428).
13 Finlay was in Trebizond in 1850. See Finlay (1995, vol. 1: 296).
14 Panaretos (1958: 69). See Bardashova (2016: 940).
15 For imperial portraiture in Byzantium, see Magdalino and Nelson (1982: 123–83); Negrău (2011: 63–75); Kalopissi-Verti (2012: 41–64); Spatharakis (1976); Parani (2003).
16 Talbot Rice (1968: 2–3); Bryer and Winfield (1985, vol. 1: 234–; vol. 2: Figures 176a–176c, 178a, 178b).
17 Finlay (1995, vol. 1: 303–4); Fallmerayer (1843, vol. 2: 95).
18 Texier and Pullan (1864: 201–2, Figure 66). See Bryer and Winfield (1985, vol. 1: 244); Bryer (2002: 97–101, Figure 41).
19 Gagarin (1897: Figure 25). See: Eastmond (2004: 139–42, Figure 96).
20 Bryer and Winfield (1985, vol. 2: Figure 210a).
21 Actes de Dionysiou (1968, vol. 4: 50–61, Figure 4); Atsalos and Karakatsanis (1997: 446–7); Oikonomides (1979: 305); Spatharakis (1976: 184–5).
22 Weyl Carr (2009: 457–62); Spatharakis (1976: 184–5, Figures 134, 135); Kalligas (2009: 365–73, Figures 1–5).
23 Kalligas (2009: 367–8).
24 Atsalos and Karakatsanis (1997: 91–4); Marsengill (2013: 224).
25 Papageorgiu asserts that the codex Marcianus graecus 524 describes an icon, not a wall painting, with images of the Byzantine emperors Alexios I, John II and Basil the Bulgar-Slayer. See Papageorgiou (2016: 49).
26 Marsengill (2013: 225–6, Figure 82); Evans (2004: 154–5, Figure 78).
27 Trahoulias (1997: 29–30); Gallagher (1979: 175–8); Fonkič (2005: 95–6).
28 Oikonomides (1979: 318).
29 Karpov (2007: 108, note 183).
30 Rosenqvist (1996: 65; 2002: 196); Bryer and Winfield (1985, vol. 1: 223).
31 Bendall (2015: 26–8, Figures 1–3; 31–3, Figures 8–11; 35–6, Figures 15, 16; 38, Figure 19 (Mother of God); 27, Figure 2; 30, Figure 6; 33–5, Figures 12–14 (Christ); 30, Figures 6–7; 42, Figures 28–9 (St. George)); Karpov (2007: 109 (St. Georgeios), 110 (Mother of God)); Retowski (1974: 24, Plate I): Manuel I, Figures 1, 6, 7 (Mother of God)).
32 Bardashova (2015: 86).
33 Rosenqvist (1996: 79–80).
34 Evans (2004: 427–9, Figures 256B, 256C, 256H); Rosenqvist (1996: 80).
35 Grierson (1999, vol. 5.1: 69–70; vol. 2: Figures 1258–60 (Andronikos III), 1598 (Manuel II)); Macrides, Munitiz and Angelov (2013: 388).
36 Evans (2004: 43–4, Figure 13C).
37 Grierson (1999, vol. 5.1: 69–70).
38 Evans (2004: 38–9, Figure 12E).

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